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HENRY C. DORR,

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PROVIDENCE, R. I.

SIDNEY S. RIDER.

1887

THE
PLANTING AND GROWTH OF PROVIDENCE

ILLUSTRATED IN THE

GRADUAL ACCUMULATION OF THE MATERIALS FOR DOMESTIC
COMFORT, THE MEANS OF INTERNAL COMMUNI-
CATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

BY

HENRY C. DORR, 1820-1897

PROVIDENCE, R. I.
SIDNEY S. RIDER.
1882.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

It is with pleasure that the publisher lays before his readers the following Tract. It is the result of careful and laborious research among the musty records of ancient days, supplemented by extensive reading. No one, unless he has performed such labor, knows the slow progress one makes in its prosecution. These facts are culled from many hundreds of references. The defective condition of the Public Records renders it impossible to obtain from that source all the information of this character which one desires, and expects there to find. Many authorities have been given, and nothing but a desire to keep the size of the Tract within reasonable limits, has prevented the introduction of more such references. The publisher has reason to believe that the author's labors have been most careful, and faithful, and that his statements may be implicitly relied upon as true history. All books contain errors, and this doubtless, will be no exception to the rule, notwithstanding every effort to make it as accurate and minute as possible. The publisher claims for it that it sets forth in a pleasant way the early history of Providence, and that its readers will learn from it many pleasant things which they did not before know, and could with difficulty find out. If this proves to be the result of its publication both the author and the publisher will be repaid.

THE PLANTING AND GROWTH OF PROVIDENCE.

AMERICAN history has many examples of a want of political foresight which has extended its influence to distant generations. One of the earliest of these is afforded by the conduct of Massachusetts towards the settlers of Rhode Island. "The Bay people" had always coveted the shores and islands of Narragansett, and the time had nearly come when they might have quietly appropriated them. Had the Puritan magistrates and elders been patient with disputes which could be but temporary, the very men who were thrust out of Massachusetts would gladly have occupied Mooshassuc and Acquetneck, by her authority and in her name. Charles I. was sufficiently occupied with domestic troubles, and gave little heed to her proceedings. The Puritan governments which succeeded his, would have confirmed all

acts of their favorite colony, and Charles II. would not have annulled them. But when the distractions of Rhode Island seemed to render its separate existence impossible (1643) the government of Massachusetts treated the reveries of Gorton as crimes. When the settlers at Acquetneck were nearly ready to unite with Plymouth, and Williams, in a moment of despondency, seemed doubtful as to the result, Massachusetts lost no opportunity to assure those who had fled from her intolerance, of what they might expect from a reunion.¹ Had her policy been more lenient, her strength as a colony and as a state would have been vastly augmented.² The harbour of Newport would have fallen, at an early day, to the keeping of men able to use its advantages, instead of being destitute of shipping during two generations. The power of Massachusetts in the Union would have been more decisive and enduring, and our national history, in some particulars, unlike what it now is.

1. See the case of the Baptist Holmes, August, 1651.

2. Williams to Winthrop, Sept. 23, 1648, ("23d, 7th, 48, so called"), Portsmouth was inclined to join Plymouth, Williams "kept himself unengaged." Williams's letter, Narragansett Club's edition, pp. 153-4.

But this wisdom was not given to the elders of "the Bay." This narrow territory, which they had not the forecast to secure, was all that remained unclaimed on the Atlantic seaboard. The founder of Providence Plantations had not the privilege of choosing any other home. When he left England, Williams did not meditate of the foundation of a colony, or even of a town. He was never ambitious, and was content with an obscure position. Had he not been forced into one which was both unexpected and unwelcome, he would now only excite antiquarian curiosity as a writer of forgotten tracts. He sought in Mooshassuc only a home, and the quiet enjoyment of his own opinions, perhaps with no other society than that of his Indian neighbours. When he had crossed the Seekonk, an enlargement of his plan beyond his original conceptions was forced upon him. Having gained a foothold by the grants of friendly Sachems, he laid with such instruments as were at his command—and some of them very indifferent ones—the foundation of "Providence Plantations."

During Williams's sojourn on the east side of the

Seekonk he had not been inattentive to the resources of the unclaimed region on the opposite shore. He must have known the spring toward which he directed his canoe, and where he made his first landing. When he had built his wigwam, and refreshed himself by the waters, he climbed, with Harris and Olney, the first surveyors of our primitive wilderness, to the summit of the eastern hill-side, directly above his dwelling-place, for a wider view of their new home. From an eminence of nearly two hundred feet they looked westward through the openings of the oak-woods, over an estate which, to an unbiased observer, must have seemed rather picturesque than promising. "The Great Salt River" flowed far below, broad and unconfined. On the east, it was bordered by ancient forest trees, and on the west by deep marshes studded with islands overgrown with coarse grass, and nearly covered by every spring tide. At the head of the bay the channel widened into a cove, with a broad gravelly beach on the east and north, and a border of salt marshes on the west. It received, on its northern side, two small and sluggish rivers, each with its own environment of swamp

and wood land. One of these, the Mooshassuc, gave its name to the adjoining region. Still farther westward low sand hills, scantily covered with pines, rose above the marsh. Beyond these, unpromising ridges of rock and gravel stretched along the western horizon and shut in the view. On its western side, the hill upon which our explorers stood, ascended abruptly from the very margin of the "Salt River," but sloped, with an easy descent, to the Seekonk, nearly a mile away on the east. Both its eastern and western hill-sides were thickly wooded with "eminent trees" of oak and cedar. Both declivities were well watered, but the rains of centuries had well nigh washed away whatever fertilizing principles the soil of the western hill-side had once possessed, and it promised only a scanty return to the labours of the settlers. But when our eager observers turned their steps northward toward the streams which poured their turbid waters into the cove, and enjoyed their first view of the natural meadows, "up streams without limits for the use of cattle,"¹ and thence looked southward over the Paw-

1. See Williams's purchase deed. (R. I. Col. Rec., VI., p. 18.)

tuxet valley, ready to be converted into corn lands and pastures, a sense of relief came over them as to the prospects of the new plantation. Descending among the rocks and through the pine woods, for a closer inspection of the shore, the hearts of the exiles were made glad by the discovery of great beds of clams, bordering the east side of the "Salt River" and of the cove, and of oysters whose flavour took away any lingering regret for the shell-fish of Massachusetts. Still farther observation showed ample supplies of pigeons and other wild birds, and of fish, some varieties of which were unknown to the waters of Massachusetts Bay. Yet more cheering prospects were afforded by the salmon ascending the river, and by glimpses of the deer in the uplands. The settlers took heart. Banishment from the society of Puritan elders and magistrates was not without its alleviations. With cheerful courage they laid the foundations of a town,—without capital, without aid,—with little good-will or assistance from England, and with none whatever from their neighbours.

It can scarcely be believed that if Williams had known the nature of the work which he had unwit-

tingly begun he would have selected as his associates all the men who gathered around him. Many of them were addicted to the theological controversies of their day, to the exclusion of healthier and more practical ideas. They lacked unity of purpose, and the variety of pursuits needed in a new plantation. None of the settlers were from the professional or commercial classes; few were skilled mechanics. Blackstone, Williams's only neighbour of liberal education, abstained from public affairs. Scarcely any, save Williams, had any political experience. Incidentally he speaks of J. T.¹ as having been an officer of an English municipal corporation, and as having some acquaintance with law.² William Harris had, very probably, been an attorney or an attorney's clerk. His books, letters and conduct indicate a legal knowledge beyond that of his contemporaries. Francis Weston³ was one of the deputies in the first General Court of Massachusetts.⁴ No others had been conversant with matters of government.

1. John Throckmorton.

2. George Fox Digg'd Out, p. 13.

3. I. Backus's History, p. 92.

4. 14 May, 1634. II. Savage's Winthrop, p. 130.

Most of those who joined Williams at a later day had yet to acquire political knowledge in the school of experience. Some of them, as Chad Brown and Thomas Olney, though not graduates, had received some literary education. But the magistrates and elders of Massachusetts so steadily opposed rotation in office that an ordinary citizen might have lived long in that colony with little participation in its public affairs.¹ The founders of Providence may be excused for some errors of policy, as they were unpracticed in a work which was thrust upon them, — to be done with such instruments as were at their command.

Even in its plan and aspect the settlement embodied the ideas of men who dissented as widely from Massachusetts as Massachusetts had dissented from old England. The plantations did not grow up around a Puritan meeting-house as their centre, with the common graveyard of the settlers forming a part of the village green. Every building was secular, and separateness and independence showed themselves, even in the resting-places of the dead.

1. See Winthrop's Journal, May 25, 1636. Cotton's answer to Williams, p. 63, Narragansett Club's edition, note.

The fields, the houses, and the barns of the plantations were the primitive places, both of secular and religious meetings. Nearly a century went by before the first steeple arose above the "Towne Streete."¹

He who observes the persistency with which local or national character shows itself, even in minute diversities of practice, will remark that of the early settlements in Rhode Island not one had a Biblical name. The Rehoboths, Sharons, Gileads, Lebanons, Carmels, which bestudded the maps of the Puritan colonies, and which indicated the source of their political ideas, found no place on the plat of Rhode Island. The name of Providence expresses the pious gratitude of its founder. Warwick keeps alive the memory of an early benefactor,—the only recompense which its settlers could give. English boroughs lent their names to other towns. To the good taste of the Antinomians of Newport we owe it that Rhode Island was not called *Patmos*, as Williams had desired.² As civilized Englishmen, proud of their birthright, the founders rejected Indian

1. King's, now St. John's Church, 1723.

2. Williams to Winthrop, June, 1638.

names for political communities, retaining them only for natural objects, as rivers and hills. During the first century royal names were in no greater request. Jamestown, Charlestown and Cumberland received their corporate titles when the days and much of the spirit of the original planters had passed away.

In what manner Williams was enabled to accomplish so much as he did remains one of the obscure passages of his life.¹ He had not been long in Providence when he received a visit from Governor Winslow, of Plymouth. The guest was touched by the hardship and poverty which his old friends were enduring, and at his departure put into the hands of Mrs. Williams a piece of gold for her relief. Williams acknowledges with respect and gratitude the welcome gift. And yet a little later he was able to join with Winthrop in the purchase of Prudence,—to pay his share of the Indian gratuities customary on such occasions and to give to Canonicus a tribute which satisfied his demands. Williams was involved in great losses by the interruption of his business in Salem, consequent upon his banishment. He had

1. See his letter to Mason, June 22, 1670.

great difficulty in recovering the moneys due him from debtors who continued sound in the Puritan faith.¹ He refers, with evident feeling, to the injustice done to him and to his family.² His circumstances were, at times, very narrow, and his supplies of money were uncertain and irregular. In 1638,³ Governor Winthrop sent him provisions. He doubtless thought that Williams had been harshly treated, and wished to do something to repair the damage which he had sustained. Hubbard, with his accustomed spitefulness, says: "Williams hath many times been an object of charity to divers persons of the Massachusetts that way disposed." There is little probability of the truth of this assertion. Yet with all this Williams was the wealthiest settler of Providence. His companions had fewer resources than he, but they departed from Salem at their leisure, and could secure such property as they had. Those who came later to the plantations brought some

1. Letters, Narragansett Club's edition, pp. 65, 69, 81.

2. Fourth series Massachusetts Historical Collections, volume 6. Winthrop Papers, pp. 211, 212, 240. Appendix to Bloody Tenent. Letter to Mason, 1670, pp. 336-7, Narragansett Club's edition.

3. February 23. Letters, p. 89.

small supplies of money, but apparently none had more than was sufficient for the stock of a small farm. Devotion to religious ideas is generally an overmatch for pecuniary difficulties. But the prevailing theories of the plantations had no attractions for the wealthy, and the settlers were left unaided to a long struggle with evil fortune.

Beginning his plantation under such adverse circumstances, both from without and from within, Williams acted with caution and foresight. He knew the experience of the planters of Massachusetts. Five years among them had not been thrown away.¹ The vessels of those days had but scanty accommodations, and little was known of the sanitary requirements of man or beast. Nearly half of the cows and almost all the mares and goats had died at sea. Many of the remainder had perished during the first year, especially where there were no salt marshes. Those which strayed into the forests were devoured by wolves. The settlers could not afford the cost of fences to prevent their utter loss. Disas-

1. See Prince's Annals, 1630. Johnson's Wonderworking Providence, Massachusetts Historical Collections, second series, volume 3, p. 159.

ters like these must be averted, and especially from a community which had so little to hope from its neighbours. Before he had gained a firm foothold on the main land Williams united with Governor Winthrop¹ in the purchase of the island of Prudence.² Here he kept goats and swine. They were safe from wolves, and could not escape into the woods. They were more hardy than sheep, required little attention, and had sufficient of marsh and upland in which to find their living.

Williams was fortunate in an associate who was far more able than himself to repel any attack upon their title.³

Prudence Island was the market garden and stock farm of Providence during its early years. From thence Williams brought supplies in his canoe. The "Great Salt River" was the first highway of the Plantations.

1. Williams's letters, pp. 70, 78. R. I. Records, vol. I., p. 45.

2. Nov. 10, 1637, is the date of the deed of Prudence.

3. See R. I. Colonial Records, vol. I., p. 45, as to the purchase of Prudence. Williams to Winthrop, 15 Feb., 1654, as to goats, etc., stolen from Prudence. Williams's letters, Narragansett Club, vol. VI., p. 78; Oct. 28, 1637, pp. 70, 71; Nov. 10, 1637, pp. 78, 79. R. I. Historical Collections, vol. III., p. 29. Williams to Winthrop, 1637-38. Narragansett Club, vol. VI., pp. 84-5.

Not until thus assured that their resources were ample and certain did the settlers make their first aggression upon the wilderness of the main land. It was two years after the first Englishmen came to Mooshassuc before their improvements began.¹ The earliest was a broad highway along the east side of the Great Salt River, lying at the foot of the hill, and following the curves of the shore. The land was there firm and easy of access. The ascent of the hill was, at that time, abrupt. Its surface was well drained, while the western shore was flat, marshy, and scarcely habitable, from want of fresh water. From the southern end of the settlement, by "Fox's hill," the road "lay by the waterside," until it approached the falls of the Mooshassuc. There, leaving the shore, it ascended, in a long diagonal slope, by the side of a steep ravine to the hill-top.² Thence northward, at an elevation of some eighty feet above the stream, it went on to the utmost limits of the clearing. Its name, the "Towne streete," was descriptive of its original character and import-

1. After the proprietors had obtained a deed from Williams, Oct., 1638.

2. Now known as Constitution Hill.

ance. It did not lose its appropriateness during an hundred and thirty years. This mode of designating the sole or chief highway of a village was not uncommon in England, and was one of the earliest English traditions accepted by the town.¹

In 1708, when it was, as the town records say, "*rectified*," it was called, being still the only one, "*our ancient streete*." During the first two years the settlers were not, it is probable, more fortunate than those of Boston, some of whom at first "lay in tents" and "small huts."²

It is not probable that the companions of Williams attempted any permanent structures before they had acquired a title to the soil.³ So soon as they could dispense with the shelter of the Indian wigwams, "those filthy, smoaky holes," as Williams calls them, it seems that the New England settlers everywhere

1. Mass. Historical Collections, fifth series, vol. V. Diary of Samuel Sewall, p. 59. The principal street of Boston was, during many years, (A. D. 1676,) called the "Towne Streete."

2. Prince's Annals, p. 19. Savage's Winthrop, vol. I., p. 44, "the poorer sort of people who lay in tents," etc., p. 267. There were very few log huts in Boston in 1638, its eighth year.

3. Oct., 1638, is the date of the "Initial Deed," the foundation of the Proprietary Title.

lived for a time in log houses rudely daubed with clay.¹ They were not long content with such habitations, and soon dwelt in houses set upon stone foundations and roughly but solidly framed with oak timbers hewn with the axe. There was little need of economy in material. It was growing everywhere around them, and might be had for the cutting.

A straggling village of some two score houses was before long set up on the eastern side of the "Towne Streete," along a tract of two miles. The owners were their own architects and builders. They had but few mechanics, and from the first gave each other mutual aid in any work which the times required. They were more fortunate than Plymouth had been, for, in 1638, "all manner of good English tools" could be bought in Boston by those who had the money to pay for them. In 1642² the English in Providence had all the usual tools, boards, nails, carpentry, doors and chests. As Williams does not mention glass, probably they were for a time forced to be content with oiled paper in its stead. Rough

1. See Johnson's *Wonderworking Providences*, p. 77. Nails, glass, and iron work could be bought in Boston at the time of the building of Providence.

2. Williams's *Key*, pp. 51, 91, 130. Providence, 1827.

and unhewn stones, of which there was no lack in the hill-side, furnished materials for foundations and for the first huge chimneys. It was long before bricks were imported or manufactured in the neighbourhood.

Each dwelling stood in its narrow "home-lot." These allotments were intended to be of at least five acres.¹ They must have differed greatly in convenience and value, according to the nature of the soil and the varying slope of the hill. They would seem to have varied considerably in their dimensions and the width of their front upon the "Towne streete."² There was little accuracy in the work of the primitive surveyors, but they seldom erred in the scantiness of their measures. Probably Williams and his earliest associates were allowed the first choice. Their lots were in the middle of the row and in the neighbourhood of the spring.

The early allotment of the homesteads has become

1. All the allotments of "home-shares" were of this size. See ex. gr., 25 Sept., 1661. Andrew Harris received a five acre lot.

2. Some had a front of an hundred and twenty-five feet, and some of considerably less. It is not improbable that the more conspicuous settlers secured larger "home-lots" than the more obscure.

involved in obscurity through the loss of the early documents of the town. We know not how soon the distribution was made, or the mode of proceeding. It appears that the committee which formed the original list of lots, and probably the Towne Street, on which they lay, consisted of Chad Brown, John Throckmorton, and Gregory Dexter. How they distributed the home-lots; by lot or otherwise; how long they were engaged in the work; whether anything was paid for the privilege of a choice; all such details are now unknown. Such, in their humble beginnings, were the "Plantations" of Providence.¹

The proprietors who judged that their allotments had fallen short of the true measure, were persistent in their applications, until the defect had been supplied. Of any surrenders of what some had received in excess of the five acres, no records have been

1. Occasional entries in the Town Meeting Records give a feeble light as to the earliest proceeding of the settlers. May 28, 1661, "Forasmuch as there is an order contained in our Towne Book, that each man's home share of land, which wanteth of five acres, it shall be made up, and there wanteth a considerable quantity to make up Thomas Olney, Jr., his house lot or home-share, to be five acres,"— "upon the 24th of this instant April, in the present year 1671, laid out unto Thomas Olney, Jr., a small quantity of land," etc.

preserved. T. Olney, Sen., and T. Olney, Jr., were both proprietors. The measure of the first was in excess, and of the second in defect of the right acreage.

When Thomas Olney, Jr., the life-long town clerk, came in his turn to devise his patrimonial estate,¹ he described his father's five acre home-lot as containing "six and a half or seven acres." The successors of the first townsmen were prompt in redressing grievances of this sort. Feb. 24, 1661, "Ordered that all home-shares of land which are not full five acres shall be made up full five acres with land in the neck, or in some other place convenient. This grant is with this condition that those who take it up damnify not any highway, nor any other man's lands already laid out."

Among the "orders" of the second year of the plantations² is the following: "M'd the several portions of grass and meadow which our neighbour Greene, our neighbour Cole, our neighbour Arnold, and Mr. Weston, laid out in the Town's name, unto

1. He died June 11, 1722.

2. 10th of 4th month.

our neighbour James, neighbour Olney, neighbour Waterman, neighbour Cole, neighbour Weston, neighbour Carpenter, neighbour Holyman, were confirmed as their proper right and inheritance, to them and theirs, as fully as the former portions, appropriated to our neighbour Throckmorton, neighbour Greene, neighbour Harris, Joshua Verin, neighbour Arnold, neighbour Williams, were and are confirmed to them and theirs."

It would thus appear that the distribution of the home-lots was not postponed until the whole work was completed by the surveyors, but that the proprietors received their shares, in batches, as the survey proceeded.¹ Williams and his neighbours were in the first allotment. The friendly terms employed in this distribution became strangely inapplicable as time went on. The narrow home-lots of the first proprietors have furnished boundaries for magnificent estates, even to our day. Each of them extended eastward from the "Towne Streete," to a road which

1. Probably the neighbourhood of the spring saw the first work of civilized man in the valley of the Mooshassuc.

divided "Providence neck" into halves, and which was a part of the original plan of the settlement.¹

This road had no distinctive name. In the deeds and public records of an hundred and fifty years, it was called "the Highway," or the "highway at the head of the lots," thus indicating a distant and little-frequented region. After the "Upper ferry," where is now "Red Bridge," was established in 1678, the "Highway" was popularly known for a century or more, as "Ferry lane." It has no name upon Daniel Anthony's map of 1803. In 1806, it received from the town council the title of "Hope street."²

1. Until the "Plantations" were divided into several towns, the tract between the Mooshassuc and the Seekonk was called in deeds and records "Providence Neck," or "the Neck." See Records of Deeds, Feb. 19, 1682. In deeds of the 17th and the early part of the last century, may be read descriptions of lands at "Tockwotton in Providence Neck." Vol. III., Probate Records, pp. 12, 13. Sept. 1726, the will of Benjamin Tillinghast makes mention of land at "Fox Hill in the south part of Providence Neck." The term is now much more restricted in its application.

2. The earliest highways were intended to be at least seventy feet wide, according to the inaccurate measurements of the proprietors' surveyors. This rule was only re-affirmed by the Town Meeting of 28th 5th mo., 1651, which "ordered, that every common highway shall be left four pole." This was a mere resolution, not binding future meetings of the townsmen. It was disregarded whenever the difficulties of the route, or the wants of the neighbourhood required only a narrower way. Town meeting, Jan. 1, 1663. A highway two poles wide from the Towne streete down to the river, was ordered to be

These two original thoroughfares—the “Town Street” and the “Highway” were for a long period connected by only three narrow lanes,—Power’s lane—a lane long nameless, but popularly called in the last century, Jail lane and King street, now Meeting street,—and the lane at the North end, called during the first years of the Town, “Dexter’s” and then “Olney’s” lane. These were in the places where, in the primitive wilderness, the ascent had been easiest or where there had been an ancient gorge, or ravine. Those who remember Meeting street before its modern grade and improvement, will agree that this must have been the reason for its position. In assigning the home-lots there was no provision for the highways of the future, nor any

laid between Thomas Arnold’s house and Stephen Northup’s house, at the North end. Thus, 23d December, 1663, the highway to and over Dexter’s bridge at the North end, was ordered to be two poles wide. On the 2d of Jan., 1681, a highway three poles wide is established from the Town street to the waterside, “that the Towne may, if they see cause, set up a wharfe at ye ende of it,”—“at ye most convenient place yt may be.” It is now Market Square. The highway to the Upper Ferry was “stated” at three poles width, 26 May, 1739. The liberal allowance of those days was “eighteen foot pole.”

See Williams’s deed 29 Jan., 1667, of the Whatcheer estate to James Ellis. Knowles’s Life, p. 122. Town Meeting Record, 27 October, 1682, p. 67. The proprietors in all their grants sold by the “18 foot pole.”

anticipation of wants beyond those of a community of small farmers. This irregular parallelogram, lying between the Town street and the Highway, and between the Bay, (sometimes in the earliest deeds,) called "the Sea," on the south, and Dexter's, afterwards Olney's, lane on the north, constituted the entire plan, sketched by the original settlers.

Having thus appropriated their domain in the wilderness, they proceeded to set up their homesteads. Here and there, two or three houses were in near neighbourhood, separated by a long interval from the next group. In the absence of drawings or descriptions, we learn something of the appearance of the primitive village, from the public records, especially from those of the Courts of Probate. The changes in the style and costliness of dwellings, are there briefly noted by contemporary observers, as the agricultural town grew prosperous, and then passed away and the commercial period came in. The probate inventories of several generations, enumerate with curious minuteness, all articles of personal property according to the rooms in which they were kept or found. We thus learn the size of every

house, the number of its apartments, and the comforts of the establishment. The houses upon the "Towne Streete" during the first generation were of a story or a story and a half in height, with a huge stone chimney at one end. In the earliest days of the town its houses had but two rooms, called in the Probate documents, the "lower room" and the "chamber." The space did not always permit the luxury of stairs, and the only ascent to the chamber was often by a ladder. These humble dwellings were nearly universal until the last decade of the seventeenth century—the poverty which followed the Indian war delaying the period of improvement. In such a house lived John Smith the miller and Town Clerk.¹ The house of John Whipple, one of the chief landholders of his day, stood near the foot of Constitution hill. It was one of the first which was rebuilt after Philip's war. It appears by the proceedings upon his will (which bears date 8th May, 1682) that his house had only a lower room and a chamber above. This was also the primitive farm house of the Plymouth colony. A few houses had

1. He died 1682.

two rooms upon the floor, sometimes called in the inventories, the "inner" and the "outer" rooms. Thomas Olney, Senr.,¹ had a "parlour," "kitchen" and "chamber." He had also a larger personal estate than most of his neighbours. Many such houses, but of date later than the Indian war, were but recently standing on the road between Providence and Bristol, several yet remain in Providence.² Houses of this class continued to be erected by persons of humble fortunes, long after the more wealthy had larger and more convenient abodes, although Williams very briefly relates that Miantonomo "kept his barbarous court" at his house,³ this would not imply that the house was a very large one. The visit was paid in warm weather, (May, 1637). Probably only the sachem slept within doors. It did no discredit to Mrs. Williams's hospitality and

1. Died 1682. Vol. I., Probate Records, p. 33.

2. 1879. One is in Waterman street, a building much older than the street itself. It was probably brought there from the Town street. One, in more complete preservation, stands upon the west side of North Main street, a few doors north of Constitution hill. The heavy, projecting eaves and solid carpentry of these lowly old buildings are like those of the seventeenth century, of which they are the successors.

3. Williams to Winthrop, May, 1637, Narr. Club, vol. VI., pp. 17—23.

to her regard to cleanliness in housekeeping, if the retinue of fifty inferior Indians were compelled to encamp in the open air. Williams, however, had at times, more money than his associates, and his house was, very probably, the largest of his day.

As the agricultural period of the town drew towards its close, the increasing comfort of the people showed itself in the enlargement of their houses. These grew in length, before they gained in height. Late in the seventeenth century, the Probate inventories enumerate effects found in the North and South, or the East and West rooms and chambers. There were then four apartments and the chimney was in the middle of the house. These dwellings became frequent at the beginning of the last century. There were then, also, a few narrow houses, of two entire stories, with a garret above, having two rooms on each floor, with a lean-to and a steep roof. The old "Gaol house," on Constitution hill is of this fashion. So also was the house of Nathaniel Brown which stood at the corner of Church street.¹ He was the earliest shipbuilder

1. It was removed in the summer of 1842.

in the town, a man of wealth for his day, and one of the founders of St. John's Church. His house was of two stories, with a huge chimney at the north end. These were the precursors of yet wider houses, in the early commercial days of the town, with four rooms on each floor, and two chambers in the roof above. But until the early decades of the last century, the greater number of the houses in the Town street were of but one story in height. Their occupants doubtless looked with wonder and disapproval upon the extravagance of their two storied neighbours.

The whole of the primitive village has passed away. The antiquarian researches of sixty years ago failed to identify a single house as a survivor of Philip's war. But the town was rebuilt with houses of the same style and dimensions. Enough of these remained to enable the octogenarians of a few years past to form a distinct conception of the Town street of Williams and Harris. It is certain that no structure of their day, could rival the house of Governor Coddington, of Newport. This was built in 1650, and with its massive timbers, projecting upper story,

and huge chimneys remained until 1835, as a memorial of the superior wealth of the settlers of Acquetneck.

When the first householders of the Town street had thus completed their habitations, their furniture, like their dwellings, was fashioned by their own hands. Though not bred as mechanics, they had sufficient dexterity to form rude planks and timbers, and the equally rude and solid chests and tables which stood upon the sanded floors.¹ Chairs were but an infrequent luxury. The families which possessed them had commonly but one or two, which were probably reserved for the elders of the household. John Smith (miller and town clerk) a man of chief note in his day, had four, John Whipple, (died May, 1685), was an innkeeper, yet his inventory mentions but "three chaires."² As a substitute the old English settle stood at the family table, by the winter fireside, and before the door during the summer evenings. The settlers were at first, not richer in culinary utensils. The ancient iron pot

1. Williams's Key, pp. 51, 52, Providence, 1827.

2. He had also "an old, decayed warming pan."

was their sole representative, and doubtless performed many functions. Like the English yeomen of the period, their tables had no display of linen. The ancient wooden trencher, with a few articles of earthenware or "puter," served all the purposes of refreshment or hospitality. During many years we find no indications of prosperity, but only of the most ordinary comfort. The earliest Probate inventories drawn up with the curious minuteness of that time give scanty proofs of the enjoyment of any household luxuries. Not one of them has any mention of the silver plate or carved oak furniture such as many of the planters of Massachusetts brought with them. All the available means of Providence were required for the purchase of arms, tools and cattle.

With the revival of the town after Philip's war, there came the first gleams of prosperity. Their Indian enemies had disappeared, and for the first time, the prospect became hopeful. There was now an enjoyment of creature comforts which had been before unknown. Kitchen utensils increased in number and variety, with other household wealth.

By 1680, frying pans, gridirons, spits and skillets, in the houses of the more prosperous few, gave forth savoury odours of which the previous generation had little experience. Even these seem to have been regarded with disapproval by some of the frugal housewives, who remembered the earlier days of the town.

Stephen Dexter died in 1678, and his widow, Abigail Dexter, was appointed his administratrix 5th January, 1679. In her inventory of his effects, she expresses her sense of the degeneracy of the times, or a lofty contempt of the vanity of the world by an entry of "a frying pan," "a skillett, and other trumpery," valued at 10 shillings. As the flocks increased, there came due attention to household manufactures. Many a family had its spinning-wheel, and one or two pairs of cards, and comforted the long winters with "house-made blankets" and other fabrics of wool. There were also spinning-wheels for flax, but none as yet for cotton. William Harris, one of the chief proprietors, and the most active citizen of his day, speedily restored his fortunes after the Indian war; at his death, in 1681, he

left the most ample establishment in the Plantations. His house had but a story and a half in height but his barns and cribs were many and well stored. His voluminous inventory shows every kind of rural comfort. Besides two chairs, a frying pan, platters, dishes and spoons, and a press for "syder," he alone of that generation, had a warming-pan for the comfort of his old age. Yet there was nothing which at that day would have been accounted a luxury,—no cup or spoon of silver, but only "puter" drinking vessels and plates. There were in the early days of the Plantations, but scanty means of family or social enjoyment when the day's work was done. If the settlers had brought books, hard labour left few opportunities for reading them. Discussions of every sort—contemporary politics, revolutions, theology—"fixed fate, foreknowledge absolute," went on while the flame of huge oak logs went roaring up the chimney. The disputants were not rich in cattle, or there would have been no lack of tallow candles—a common household manufacture in later days. Like the farmers of Massachusetts, the men of the "Towne Streete" had the light of pine knots for

their sole guide in evening work or study. So dependent were they upon their forests, even forty years after their settlement, that the Townsmen prohibited the conversion of pine trees into naval stores. It was a mistaken economy which prohibited or delayed navigation in the supposed interest of farmers. Four years after Philip's war, (December 14, 1681,) the Town meeting adopted an earnest resolution, an extract from which must suffice: "Considering that the Town hath long experienced the great benefit they have had by their pitchwood for candlelight,"—"and whereas there is a *bruit* abroad that some are determined to propagate the running of tar from pitchwood,"—"the Town prohibits making tar or coal from pitchwood," "except that each landholder is permitted to make ten gallons for his own use, and on his own land."¹

1. We may remember that the use of pine wood for lights was lamented among the Southern people, as one of the hardships of the rebellion. The same hardship was long borne without complaint by the people of New England.

See Upham's Hist. of Witchcraft, vol. I., p. 44. "Sticks of candlewood" were in common use in Newburyport in 1680. Mr. Newman, of Rehoboth is said to have compiled his bulky concordance by the light of pine knots.

So persistent were they in their original pursuits, that forty years after their settlement, the people around one of the best harbours in North America, had not learned the appropriate use of their naval stores.

It was long before the increasing wealth of the Plantations enabled them to add to the scanty comforts of their earlier years. The humble character of their improvements was all that could be expected, when science had not furnished even to the wealthiest cities, any knowledge of the means of preserving health. In one particular, the Townsmen showed (as became a company of exiles), a kindly care for wayfarers, while perhaps, they were not without some forethought as to their own security. The wells of the old town were not within the enclosures, but were dug in the Town street, in front of the houses, and were free to all. There was, at first, but one for every group of buildings. Later, there was a long row, one before every second or third house. During the first century of the town the wells were dug in the street as a thing of course. The Town street was too wide for the traffic of that

time, and no complaint was made of the narrowing of the highway. With the increase of the Town, towards the middle of the last century, the permission of the Town Meeting was required. Later still, the same assent was requested, whenever a pump was to be set up, in the place of an ancient well curb.¹

With a like kindly care for posterity, the ancient proprietors withheld from sale the spring at which they had first refreshed themselves in the wilderness. It was first called "Scot's spring," after Richard Scot, a conspicuous settler in the neighborhood—afterwards "Roger Williams's spring," in memory of his landing place, but it was never the property of either. The "spring lot" was retained by the Proprietors of the Plantations until 1721, (3d July,)

1. See, for example, Town Meeting Records, 29 August, 1749. These ancient wells are now filled up, or hidden by the pavement. In the later years of the last century they were fitted with pumps. Two or three of these yet remain at the North end, as memorials of the benevolence of other days. Within the memory of the late Gov. Allen there was a row of them, along "Cheapside." A specimen of these wells, with its narrow curb of antique pattern, stood but a few years ago, upon Congdon street, (near Angell street). This is not an old street, but it was opened while the town preserved its traditions, and many of its landholders followed ancient fashions, which were then passing away. See also Stone's Life of Howland, p. 25.

when it was sold by them to Gabriel Bernon, with an express reservation of the spring to the public use. Their deed proves that they were too well aware of its value to allow it to pass into private ownership, and affords also an instructive example of the worthlessness of many local traditions. The spring, as it appeared at the close of the last century is thus described by one who then lived near it: "The spring gushed forth from the hill-side in a copious stream, issuing from a shallow pool, and from boiling quicksands, and flowed down to the adjacent river. At a later day it was surrounded by a circular wall of rough stones. It was at the foot of the steep bank on which Gabriel Bernon's house was built (1721). Now covered with earth, high above the original level, it is hidden from sight, and all its associations with the early settlers, utterly destroyed."¹

While many things have utterly perished, which would have illustrated the social life of the first townsmen, the records preserve to us, at least the knowledge of their places of abode. Some of the

1. Z. Allen.

earliest were at the South end, not far from " Mile end cove." But in the days of the old farming town, that end of the Town street was not the favorite one, and the houses were widely separated from each other. The centre of the town was by the falls of the Mooshassuc, and there, the stream was deep enough for the wants of a much later day. The most remote dwellings at the South end, were those of Tillinghast, Wickenden and Power. The last gave his name to one of the primitive highways, coeval with the Town street (Power's lane). Only at a comparatively recent period, Wickenden was commemorated in a like manner by the successors to his estate.¹

Opposite to the present Crawford street, were, during several generations, the home-lots of the Fields. They were among the early planters, and for long among the chief landholders of the town. "Field's Point" is a memorial of one of the first members of the family. The northernmost of their

1. Wickenden street was an old thoroughfare and bore divers popular names. (See Street Records, vol. VII.) In 1792 it was called "Ferry lane, or Wickenden street" in public documents. It received its legal name in 1805.

estates upon the Town street was the site of the "Garrison house" during Philip's war. It was one of the largest houses of that time, and when the town gave leave to the citizens to "fortify" themselves, this, with other of the strongest buildings, was "fortified" with iron gratings at the windows. This, with the other places of security, which the Indians did not venture to attack, saved that part of the town from the conflagration of March, 1676.¹

With its site now partly covered with what, in the days of colonial loyalty was known as Hanover street, and now, as College street, was the homestead of Chad Brown. Where is now Thomas street, was the original site of the Angells. They added to their original home-lot the square immediately to the south of it, part of which, until 1774, was an orchard. The next home-lot on the north of it, by the side of the ancient alley, was the dwelling place of Thomas Olney, the successor of Williams, after the disruption of the religious society which he had founded.

1. The "Garrison house" remained until 1772. It stood about forty or fifty feet from the Town street. The last of the original owners of the site sold it in that year, (Feb., 1772,) to Joseph Brown, who, in the year 1774 built there the house now owned by the Providence Bank.

This old byway upon the Olney estate was ordered by the second Thomas Olney, the Town Clerk, to be forever kept open, in order that his descendants might have perpetual access to the family burial place. His purpose has been signally disappointed. The alley has long savoured of anything but reverence for ancestors. It does not appear that any dwelling ever stood upon the site of the Quaker Meeting house, or of the Court House parade. Not far above at the foot of the present Howland street, in neighborhood too near for friendship, was Roger Williams, with John Throckmorton next him on the south, and Joshua Verin on the north. Verin's lot was by and upon the site of the present Church street. Here occurred the famous scene of his "restraining the liberty of conscience" of Mrs. Verin, described with grim humour by Winthrop. It adds much to the picturesqueness of Winthrop's narrative, to learn that Williams and Verin were in immediate neighbourhood, and that Mrs. Verin was sorely tempted to neglect the family dinner in order that she might attend the prophesyings of Williams in the next house. Verin had some excuse for his vexation if

he came home from his work at noon, and found his meat overdone, or neglected under circumstances like these.¹

A few paces farther to the north, upon the lot next to St. John's churchyard, lived Richard Scot, the first convert here, of George Fox, and the persistent enemy of Williams. It is singular that the bitterest foes of Williams, and who gave him annoyance equal to any which he had experienced from the elders of "the Bay," were those in closest contact with him, and who should have lived in the closest interchange of neighbourly good offices. The letters of Throckmorton preserved by Williams,² and of Scot, by Fox,³ do no discredit to their powers of invective. At his post of observation, some two hundred feet distant, (across what is now the churchyard, and upon which no dwelling ever stood,) Scot devoted many years to the study of the less attractive traits of Williams's character, which he preserved in his

1. Our last intelligence from Verin, is from the island of Barbadoes, whence, (Sept. 28, 1663), he sent a letter of attorney to William Harris, to sell his Providence estate. He must have found ample scope for freedom of conscience among the old free-traders of the Bahama channel.

2. George Fox Digged Out, pp. 8, 14, 23.

3. New England's Firebrand Quenched. Appendix.

caustic letter to George Fox. With such neighbours on either hand, we need not wonder that Williams sometimes indulged in an acrimony of expression which had an enlivening effect upon the dullness of the Town street. Richard Scot was not the only character of note, who dwelt upon the site. There lived William and Mary Dyre, even more fervent enthusiasts for their belief. From that spot she went forth, to be hanged for Quakerism on Boston Common.¹ Beyond Scot, along nearly the whole east side of the present "Constitution Hill," there was scarcely a house. The steep hill-side behind it did not invite purchasers. In 1659, came John Whipple, from Massachusetts. He purchased nearly the whole tract eastward of that part of the Town street.²

In the earlier days of the town that slope of the Town street stood empty. At the beginning of the last century, and forty years later, the "old goal

1. Mary Dyre's son held office in Rhode Island at the time of her execution. Savage's Winthrop, vol. I., p. 26.

2. Vol. I. Deeds and Transcripts, A. D., 1659. July 27, Quarter Day: "This day John Whipple, Senr., is received into the Town, a purchaser, to have a purchase right of lands." p. 105. His posterity were, during several generations, among the chief landholders of the Plantations.

house," still standing at the top of the hill, did not add to the attractiveness of the locality. Beyond it, and where the ground once more becomes level, the settlers again appear in near neighbourhood. Near Dexter's (or Olney's) lane, lived Gregory Dexter, who contributed his full share to the controversies in which the town was singularly rich. A little farther on was Shadrach Manton, who, as Town Clerk, has preserved much of our early history. The North End was, during many years, the most closely settled part of the town. In the field directly east of the North Burying Ground, there was, within the memory of some recently living,¹ a row of five old cellars, with foundations of stone. The houses which stood upon them were burned in Philip's war, and were never rebuilt. When the town revived after its catastrophe, it commenced its movement towards the south. Only in recent years, has there been a new growth or development in a northerly direction. In the valley of the Mooshassuc, at the foot of the hill, there was no increase until the com-

1. Gov. Philip Allen and Mr. Dexter Thurber.

mercial period of the town.¹ The labour of seventy years did no more than to occupy and build up the ancient home-lots on the east side of the Town street.

All the best lots in "Providence Neck" were appropriated by the first settlers. That its valuable fields were not many, is evident from the number, even of the earliest comers, who passed on into the wilderness, and sat down by the water streams. Within four years after the settlement of Providence, the natural meadows on both sides of the Pawtuxet drew away some of the chief inhabitants. Among them were some of the family of Roger Williams,² and to his comfort, probably, his future enemy, William Harris.

The Rhodeses, Arnolds, Carpenters and others, began a new plantation, which, during eighty years, paid taxes nearly equal to those of Providence. Pawtuxet and Newport were of contemporaneous origin but of very diverse fortunes. The Blackstone

1. The Proprietors sold no lots northward of the site of Mill bridge, until 1718. Staples's Annals of Providence, p. 37, nor was the street extended in that direction.

2. Zach. Rhodes was son-in-law of Williams.

valley gained also a few settlers. These and the dwellers by the Pawtuxet became the men of the "North woods" and of the "South woods," in the next generation. Warwick, (granted by Miantonomo, in 1642-3,) was of especial service to Providence, in drawing away Gorton and some of his more unruly disciples. In their new homes, there was ample space for large meadows and pastures. The original allotment of Providence did not aid its prosperity, even as an agricultural town. Its purpose was, to give every one a front upon the street and river and an equal share of the farm lands. This attempt at democratic equality only created a multitude of small estates, widely separated, and in some instances, nearly or quite a mile apart. Besides his "home-lot" of five acres, each proprietor had a "six acre lot," at a distance from his abode, and in a few years, one or more "stated common lots," which he acquired by purchase from the Proprietary, or by their occasional land dividends among themselves. The waste of time, and insecurity of property from Indian thefts, when not within the immediate view of its owners, were constant sources of loss and

vexation to the holders of these minute estates. Their exchange and surrender, so as to create larger and more manageable freeholds, afforded a great part of its occupation to the Town Meetings of two generations, and were a check to agricultural improvements. The wearisome hours of the "Town's Quarter Day," were in great part due to the unskillful plan of the first townsmen.

Each "home-lot" was the dwelling-place of its owner. On the Town street, was commonly a narrow strip of greensward before the house, which has been described. As soon as the townsmen had cattle, the barns were set up for better protection, at a short distance eastward from the dwellings. The most valuable property was thus gathered into near neighborhood, and the destruction in Philip's war involved almost the utter ruin of the owner. The eastern slope of the hill, towards the "Highway," with its brooks and well-watered fields, was the pasture land. It seems to have been an ample provision for all the cattle which, in that generation, were owned in "Providence Neck."

Every home-lot had its orchard, about half way

up the western hill-side. There, but a few paces from their homestead, were the graves of the household. The family allotment soon became "alike their birth and burial place,"—created, or strengthened local attachments and arrested tendencies to farther migration. In the near neighbourhood of the present Benefit street, were in long succession, the resting places of the founders and of their children. There, from one end of the village to the other, lay the earlier generations of Dexters, Williamses, Olneys, Watermans, Angells, Browns, Crawfords, Powers, Tillinghasts, the patriarchs of the town. When the controversies of the Town street were ended, the disputants were laid to rest by their surviving opponents, in the quiet of their homes in the wilderness. We have no record of their homely ceremonial. With the views and feelings of many among them, they probably desired that there should be none. The father of Governor Sessions, preserved among his boyish recollections, that of the funeral of Roger Williams. He was buried, as became a Governor, with such military honors as the Plantations could afford, and his fellow soldiers of

the Indian war fired a volley over his grave. Whether through poverty or want of skill, or the early diffusion of Quaker ideas, no inscriptions were set over the earlier graves. This primitive custom of sepulture outlasted three generations. When the maritime period of the town came in, it was evident that social changes were coming with it. New purchasers were seeking for abodes, and old homesteads were divided. The forecast of Thomas Olney and of a few others, at the end of the seventeenth century, had induced the Proprietors to set apart the most desolate sand-hill in the Plantation for the burial of the dead.¹ During the next forty years, few availed themselves of the permission. There was no anticipation of modern sanitary ideas, and the funeral march was a long and dreary one, for, until a comparatively recent date, the corpse was carried forth upon the shoulders of the neighbours. The household graves remained until the destruction of the home-lots by the opening of Benefit street. The chief obstacle to this certain and needful expansion of the town, was the determined hostility of the

1. Town Meeting, June, 1700.

children of the founders. Whoever wonders at the curves in the modern Benefit street, (before the street was widened more conspicuous than at present,) may be surprised to learn that they originated in the order given by the Town to the committee who laid out the street, to avoid disturbing the graves of the early settlers. This sentiment is well nigh extinct among us. In 1750, deference to ancestral feeling delayed and well nigh defeated the chief improvement which had been projected by the Town. But as years went by, a new generation of Proprietors deemed ancient orchards and household cemeteries more valuable to the living than to the dead, and they were accordingly converted into lots upon the new street. Such remains as could be collected, were transferred to the North Burial ground. One by one the household cemeteries disappeared.¹ Two only now remain, those of Waterman and Tilling-

1. The General Assembly authorized the transfer of the bodies from the Olney burial ground in October, 1785. The Town Council concurred 3d April, 1786. The burial ground of Chad Brown, in College street, was purchased by the town in 1795, from his descendants. That of the Crawford family, at the corner of Benefit and Benevolent streets, was destroyed in 1801. Its site is now in great part, covered by the highway.

hast, the last memorials of this primitive custom of the town.

The narrow means of the first settlers added much to the severity of their labours. When they had harvested the crops from acres neither broad nor fertile, they could enjoy the fruit of their toils only by the wearisome use of the Indian mortar. Ten years went by, before they were able to set up the mill which is everywhere one of the first undertakings of a community of civilized men. It was fortunate for Williams that one of his earliest companions was a millwright. So soon as they were able, the townsmen availed themselves of his services. In 1646, (1st of 1st mo.,) they made a grant of land to John Smith, in the valley where the falls of the Mooshassuc invited the erection of the Town Mill. The memory of his obsolete machinery, (for breaking up grain by an operation similar to that of a pile driver,) has been preserved in the name of "Stampers street." Long before jail or meeting-house, the Town mill was the earliest institution of the Plantations. It received much careful oversight from the Town meeting. The miller was to build

and repair it at his own cost, and the town promised to erect or to permit no other. "Town meeting, 3d, 9mo., 1649, agreed that every second and fifth day of the week shall be for grinding of the corn of the town." The other days were the miller's own. "The sixteenth part of every bushel (with allowance for waste according to the custom of the country) is to be allowed for grinding."¹ The mill fixed the centre of the town at the North end, and long kept it there. Around and near it, those who were able, set their houses, and it became not merely the nucleus of population, but the place of public rendezvous and exchange. It served the same purpose as the meeting-house in early Massachusetts, or as the newspaper and insurance offices of later days. The domestic parliament there in perpetual session, saw the first caucuses in town politics, canvassed representatives and measures, and took part in many a sturdy encounter of the Baptist, the Gortonian, and the Quaker. The population became densest in its

1. *Providence Gazette*, a century later, Nov. 10, 1764. The toll at the Town Mill was set at one-sixteenth part of the rye, one-eighteenth part of the wheat, one-fourteenth part of the corn, conformable to an order of the Town's committee lately appointed for that purpose.

neighbourhood. There, too, was sufficient depth of water for the earliest navigation by "cannowes and boates," and there the country roads, long mere bridle-paths, converged. The easy slope of the hill at Dexter's (now Olney's) lane, afforded the best opening towards Rehoboth, and when Providence first had inns and fairs and shops, they were set up in the same vicinity. Near the fresh stream, also congregated the first who practised the most useful arts and trades. June 24, 1655, p. 123, Town Meeting Records, "It is ordered that Thomas Olne, Junr., his houselot, be laid out by the Stampers, according to his bill, provided he follow tanning, and further provided that the Town likewise doe maintaine a sufficient highway." This was in his youthful days. In later years he was a chief officer and landholder of the town. Sixty years later, (October 27, 1705,) the water power which moved the Town Mill was not yet fully employed. The Proprietors then granted to John Smith, the son of the old miller, and to Richard Arnold, the land next south of the grist mill for a sawmill, which they were to build within three years. The inns and the "goal house"

were in the "Towne streete," not far away, and the mill was thus the centre of the old agricultural town. The neighbourhood has long since lost all semblance of what it was in its early days. The present embankments of the Mooshassuc had no existence during a century and a half. The hill-side sloped abruptly to the water's edge. During all this time, being the only accessible fresh stream, there was the common watering place. The murmurs of ancient inhabitants against the brawls and disturbances of boys and negroes, who, morning and evening, congregated near the mill, with their masters' cattle, assure us that the early days of Providence had a delightful experience of patriarchal manners.¹

During one hundred and eighty years the Town Mill fulfilled its office, and was one of the last memorials of primitive times. It was destroyed at last, by the Blackstone canal, through which some

1. The annoyance had become so great that an act of assembly, 1681, was passed in order to give some check to the disturbances. By a communication in the *Gazette*, (March 30th, 1765), it appears that the nuisance was still unabated. The "boys and negroes" still disturbed the quiet of the Town street, by "riding in droves" to Mill River, every morning and evening, racing as they went, without hindrance from the constables of those days.

over-sanguine citizens, fondly hoped that the old locality would regain something of its primitive importance. They gained nothing but experience. The Town, now that its once favorite mill was silenced and deserted, endeavoured to repossess itself of the acres which it had granted to the old miller. His descendants maintained their possession with a sturdy perseverance worthy of their ancestor. During ten years the contest claimed the attention of the courts.¹ The Town gained nothing but a better knowledge of the vagueness and inaccuracy of its

1. The case of the Town Mill, *Providence vs. Martha Howell*, enables us to comprehend something of the bitterness and persistency of the controversies of the first two generations. They were—nearly all—results of an attempt to conduct public affairs without the aid of legal knowledge or experience. Something may be learned of the appearance of the neighbourhood of the Town Mill from the preamble of an act of the Assembly, passed March, 1762. The tide then flowed up to the falls of the Mooshassuc. The highway, which was but little above the level of the stream, was “not passable at all in the winter season, unless the cattle be shod, by reason of the springs that rise out of the ground.” “Twenty or thirty rods of said road is overflowed every spring tide, and is impassable for carts, or people on foot, during the tide being up, which is a great damage both to the said Town and the country, a great part of the wood being brought into town by that road.” The road is “so worn by the great quantity of water that falls from the hill, that it is not passable for more than one cart at a time.” The Legislature therefore give power to the Town of Providence, to raise £1,000, by lottery, to repair the “highway leading to the mills, and into Smithfield and Gloucester.” Schedule, p. 90, March, 1762.

own early grants and records. The estate, once the most valuable in the Plantations, ended by becoming an inheritance equally unprofitable to those who held or who sought its possession.

It may be that the first settlers at the North end deemed the hill-top more defensible than the valley against Indian attack. It was, at least, secure from the freshets which sometimes poured down the Mooshassuc. Its winter floods once rolled from the densely wooded country, volumes of water, such as the last two generations have not seen. Very few purchasers set their houses by the margin of the river. Only some of the most adventurous built by the very brink of the stream, at the bottom of the steep and narrow valley. Tradition gave warning that the spot was full of danger. Recent years had given serious, but unheeded admonitions.

At length, during the winter of 1784,¹ a torrent swept away the bridge by the Town Mill, and all the

1. See Town Meeting Records, 20th Sept., 1784. The Town issued its promissory notes, bearing interest at 6 per cent., receivable in payment of taxes, and payable in two years, in order to pay the workmen for repairing and paving the injured streets, as follows: 200 notes of \$5; 150 notes of \$8; 115 notes of \$10. See vol. VII., Town Meeting Records, p. 31.

houses in its neighbourhood, and carried destruction almost to Weybosset bridge. The tenants barely escaped the wreck of their dwellings.¹ The ruin was only exceeded by that of Philip's war. The walls which now confine the river, and the new streets, at a much higher level, and which have destroyed the original character of the locality, are the work of a later and more prosperous time. It is not easy to recall the scene, during the latter half of the last century, when Mill bridge saw the building of many of the earliest brigs, sloops and schooners which sailed for the West Indies, or bore arms as privateers during the Revolution.²

1. The flood continued during the 6th and 7th of January. The neighbouring streets, houses and business establishments were swept away. The cove afforded room for the waters to lose something of their force, so that the bridge escaped destruction. See *Providence Gazette*, Jan. 10, 1784.

2. Some of these were launched by an ancient house yet standing, west of the old Canal market. The "Crawford house" was built by John Crawford, who died in 1722. Its door originally stood two steps above the street. The entrance is now into the second story. There were other ship-yards on the west side of the Mooshassuc. On the 18th of April, 1753, the Town Meeting ordered a lease of land on the west side of the Mooshassuc, for the purpose of ship-building, a short distance below Mill bridge. A little below the Crawford house, on the other side of the river, stood the old workhouse. Before it was a wharf which accommodated the seagoing schooners of the last century. In 1769, the Town Meeting authorized the Town Council to repair the work-house wharf.

When they had thus distributed the home-lots, and set up house and mill, the Townsmen were at leisure to estimate the chances of the success or failure of their Plantation. The prospect was not encouraging, and the merit of their success can only be rightly appreciated after a view of the difficulties overcome.

A more extended experience in colonization has taught a lesson which in the seventeenth century, was but ill understood. Unless there be a practical monopoly or a great staple product, the capital invested in new countries is generally sunk, and only in the second generation is there a surplus left for improvements or accumulation. Massachusetts had some wealthy immigrants, was supported by a powerful corporation, and that in its turn, was aided by a rising sect at home. Yet emigration to New England yielded no profit to any that undertook it. Governor Winthrop, who had sold a valuable estate in England, died poor.¹ Massachusetts had little to spare, either of men or money, for aid to her own new plantations,

1. Johnson's Wonderworking Providences, Mass. Hist. Coll., second series, vol. VII., p. 26.

still less to independent or unfriendly ones. Hence, she steadily, and for a year or two, successfully, opposed the settlement at Hartford. The planters of Massachusetts were carefully chosen, and there were among them workmen skilled in all the crafts useful in a new country. No abler body of men was ever sent from England on such an errand. Within a few years, the vessels of Massachusetts made voyages to Madeira, and New England Puritans gathered their first profits by supplying Spanish Papists with codfish, wherewith to keep their Lent. Yet the wealth of Massachusetts, at the end of the seventeenth century, (except in Boston and a few other seaports), was very small, and the people had few comforts.¹ This was the case, although they had oak and other timber, and fuel in abundance—hemp and flax—and many vegetables, then and now in constant use, growing spontaneously in the fields.² Rhode Island saw the earliest attempt to found a colony without capital or foreign aid. Among the

1. This subject is considered in a paper in *Mass. Hist. Collections*, third series, vol. VIII., p. 338.

2. *Wood's New England Prospect*. Prince Society's ed., p. 15.

associates of Williams were no men of wealth, or of much mechanical skill. They were nearly all farmers, and expected to draw their subsistence from the soil. Their dreams of prosperity (if any such they had), were of meadow lands, corn fields, and flocks in the valley of the Mooshassuc, and not, like those of the men of Boston, of warehouses and anchorage by the shores of their Bay. They had little beside the household effects which they brought with them, and their Massachusetts neighbours did their best to prevent their acquiring more. It was not easy in those days, to lay the foundations even of an agricultural community. The country was densely wooded and must be cleared. The Indians had no cattle, and knew the use of few vegetables, save corn. Little which was of immediate necessity, could be bought from them. The native grass was coarse and several seasons were required in order to make good meadows. Some time passed before the Plantations had cattle. They had, at first, little money to buy them, not corn enough to feed them, and no sufficient shelter during the winter.¹ In

1. Williams's Key, p. 92.

1642, the English in Rhode Island worked with "Howes," in want of ploughs. In December, 1636,¹ there were only thirty ploughs in Massachusetts. Of the thirty, probably not one was brought to Rhode Island.² The Plantations were long strangers to beef, milk or butter. In 1636, a cow in Massachusetts cost twenty-five or thirty pounds, a pair of oxen, £40, and corn was sold at 5s. a bushel. James Brown,³ mentions that in the time of his grandfather, Chad Brown, "the Indians stole everything they could lay their hands on,"—"a cow was sold in Providence for twenty-two pounds in silver,"⁴ and that when after a season of unusually hard work,

1. Winthrop's Journal, 1st ed., p. 114. Savage's Winthrop, I., p. 206.

2. Prince's Annals, Mass. Hist. Society's ed., 1633, p. 83.

3. MS. in possession of R. I. Hist. Soc.

4. In 1642, (Johnson's Wonderworking Providences, p. 35,) the price of a cow was £22 in Massachusetts. Hubbard, p. 238: All sorts of great cattle, (1636—1640), usually sold for £25 per head. The price fell in 1640, to £15 and £10 per head, afterwards to £5. (Mass. Hist. Coll., third series, vol. V., p. 268). In 1633 a cow cost £20 in Plymouth, a house and garden in Plymouth, £10, another £15. (Plymouth Records). In 1634, another was sold for £20. But Providence had not even the wealth of Plymouth. These were prices paid in days long before the issue of paper money, and represented sums far greater than their present nominal value. Such was the experience of "the Bay." That Rhode Island suffered privations even more severe, may be learned, or inferred, from the writings of Williams.

the townsmen endeavored to refresh their spirits, by a festival, the chief luxury was a boiled bass without butter.

To supply their want of cattle, the Plantations soon had ample stock of swine and goats. These were more hardy, and required but little attention, being, according to the complaint of their neighbours, only too ready to get their own living, and to help themselves. There was no complaint of a lack of animal food. The Indian methods of killing game without fire arms had permitted great increase of their numbers.¹ The shores yielded abundance of wild fowl and shell fish. There was, sometimes, a want of corn, after a bad harvest, but enough of all other kinds of food. Williams wrote, (January 10, 1637-8,) to Governor Winthrop, for a manservant for their island of Prudence, where their plantation had become successful. In 1641, cattle were numerous both at Providence and Warwick. In 1642,² Acquetneck abounded in cattle beyond the rest of the country. Gorton and his companions had been laborious and successful at Warwick, and the Massa-

1. Mass. Hist. CoH., first series, vol. V., p. 7.

2. Hubbard, p. 345.

chusetts soldiers found ample plunder upon their lands. But with all these alleviations, the condition of the settlers was one of great hardship, and after several years, one of only comparative comfort.¹ They endeavoured to cheer their spirits with the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man," Williams² attests that the Rhode Island English made good wines of grapes and strawberries, both of which he had often tasted. But in this last manufacture, later generations have not been tempted to persevere.

The experience of the founders, during their five years in Massachusetts was doubtless of much service in hastening their success. They had a better beginning than Plymouth where everything had been new, and unforeseen. They had learned to guard themselves against the climate, and like their former brethren of "the Bay," could accommodate themselves to the extremes of American temperature. All the early writers of New England, whatever their other disagreements, concur in ascribing their greatest suffer-

1. Callender's Century Sermon, R. I. Hist. Col., vol. IV., p. 74.

2. Key to the Indian Language, p. 122, Narr. Club's ed.

ings, rather to the summer heat, than to the Arctic cold.¹

It should be remembered that they had plenty of fuel, but for summer only the heavy woolen clothes, which they brought or imported from England. There was no cotton, and linen was only a luxury. They complained that the unaccustomed heat aggravated all inflammatory diseases, and was the principal cause of the fatal termination of many.

The natural resources of the Plantations, their waterfalls and harbour, required supplies of capital and labour, which the settlers could not command. To a people of such narrow means, the Mooshassuc was as valuable as the Blackstone. The English of Rhode Island were too few for the work which was forced upon them, and were affrighted at being left alone in the presence of the unbroken strength of the Narragansetts.²

So little encouragement was offered to mechanics

1. Hubbard, Mass. Hist. Coll., 2d series. vol. V. p. 20, c. 4. Josselyn's Two Voyages to New England, p. 47. So also Lechford.

2. The unfavourable events which tended to discourage emigration, will be considered more at large in a future paper, at present a few illustrations must suffice.

that during a long period, the most necessary crafts had sometimes no representatives in the Plantations. In 1649, (June 15,) Williams wrote to Winthrop, that there was no smith in Providence. Many years later, (January 27, 1703-4,)¹ the Town Meeting gave to a smith and to a weaver, each a lot, (on Constitution hill,) to induce them to carry on their work in the Town street.

These earliest obstacles to the success of the Plantations, the want of capital and of diversity of skill, find continual illustration in the public records. The letter of the Colony to John Clarke, then in England,² gives a vigorous description of the troubles of a generation too poor to avail themselves of their natural advantages, and exposed to the vindictive legislation of their neighbours, (November 5, 1658). The colonists were at first well armed, but as their fowling pieces wore out, the means of their repair and renewal were but scanty. From want of fire-arms, which Massachusetts would not suffer them to purchase, it became necessary to teach children the

1. Vol. I., p. 5, Town Meeting Records.

2. R. I. Col. Records, vol. III., pp. 396-399.

use of the bow.¹ Narragansett Bay, was, during the seventeenth century, navigated only by sloops and schooners, bearing the flags of Massachusetts and the New Netherlands. The officers of these vessels too often robbed the plantation of Winthrop and Williams at Prudence,² or bought the swine and goats from unfaithful keepers, who never accounted to the owners for the money which they had received.³

Had they possessed a very moderate capital, and a few men bred to the sea, the Plantations might have participated in the fisheries which laid the foundation of the wealth of Boston. Even so late as 1675-6, Newport had only two or three pinnaces and sloops, which were employed in watching the Indians.

In 1658,⁴ a year of scarcity and trouble, "all commodities were drawn from the neighbouring colonies, except produce." There was no grain save Indian

1. Code of 1647, R. I. Col. Records, vol. I., pp. 153-4.

2. Williams to Winthrop, Oct. 9, 1654. Narr. Club, vol. VI., p. 177. Killing of Winthrop's goats at Prudence island.

3. Winthrop papers, p. 288. Coddington at Rhode Island had made a like complaint in 1648.

4. See letter of Williams to Winthrop, 15 Feb., 1654. Narr. Club, vol. VI., p. 280. Legislative resolutions at Warwick, before quoted.

corn, and the revengeful Puritans of Massachusetts threatened to combine, and to sell that only at their own rates. This was the year in which Rhode Island refused the demand of the United Colonies for the expulsion of the Quakers.¹ In 1654,² Mr. Foote, an Englishman, conversant with such things, proposed to establish iron works in the neighbourhood of Providence. Williams favoured the project, but the townsmen were so disunited that they were unable to respond to his offer, and the enterprising mechanic went to aid in building up the prosperity of New Jersey. When the charter of Charles II. was received in Newport, the Colony sent an invitation to Providence to join in the celebration of so great and unexpected a boon. A cheerful union of all the unfriendly and contentious towns might have been in many ways beneficial. But the Town Meeting of Providence declined to send soldiers³ to join in the parade, excus-

1. Letter of United Colonies, Sept. 12, 1657. Reply of Rhode Island, October 13, 1657, March 13, 1657-8.

2. Williams's letters, Narr. Club, vol. 6, pp. 284, 286.

3. Nov. 18, 1663, "It is ordered that concerning the warrant which came from the President to send soldiers to solemnize the receipt of the charter, that a letter be drawn up and sent to the Court of Commissioners to excuse the not going."

ing itself because of its poverty, and the hardness of the times.

This its first difficulty was not surmounted, during the days of the old agricultural town. It met the freemen on every side, in every undertaking which was proposed. Long after the first settlement, (according to Governor Ward,)¹ the people were very poor, the farmers had an indifferent market, and there was no navigation until A. D. 1700. Even the great harbour of Newport did not attract a maritime population, except occasional adventurers who were in quest of a larger toleration than civilized states are willing to bestow. There was little to invite the enterprise which follows capital. The increase of the Plantations was slow, and their wealth for a long time inconsiderable.

In the absence of information from contemporary diaries or letters (save the few references in the correspondence of Williams,) the Town Records, from which we learn the existence of these difficulties, give also the chief information as to the times and modes in which they were met and overcome.

1. R. I. Col. Records, vol. V., p. 8.

As religious controversies were excluded from the Town Meetings, these were wholly occupied with material interests, and with disputes among farmers about questions peculiar to themselves. In a few years their small allotments had been rearranged and consolidated. With a little increase of property they became desirous of better and more ample pasture land than was afforded by the east side of the "Salt River." The first project which was entertained, after the establishment of the Town Mill, was the building of a bridge. There was, in the early days of the Town, a ford at low water, across the cove, where is now the present Steeple street. With this, and with a ferry to the meadows of Weybosset, the first two generations at the South end were forced to be content. Population gathered around the Mill, and the neighbouring tannery, and soon a highway¹ (one of the earliest) was opened,

1. May 27, 1671, the order of the Town Meeting mentions "a highway going down to Mooshassuc river," by the house of Thomas Olney, Jr. It connected the bridge, mill and tannery, with the northeast part of the town. This was one of the earliest highways. The mention of it, is as a boundary in the grant of land to make up Thomas Olney, Jr.'s five acre home-lot. The way must have been quite as ancient as the tannery. Page 256 Deeds and Transcripts.

from the tannery, in a northeasterly direction towards the upper end of the Town street.

On the "15th of the 12th mo., 1654, so called," Williams wrote to Winthrop, making mention of a "Mr. White now wintering in Warwick," and saying, "many of ours have thought of trying his skill about a new bridge at Providence, and he hath promised to come over to us, to consult, but the weather hath hindered." But the means of the settlers were scanty, and their progress slow. They had no payment to offer him but Proprietary land. The project failed at that time, and waited eight years longer for its accomplishment. The need of ampler pasturage grew more pressing as time went on. When the townsmen felt secure from the aggressions of neighbour colonies, under the Charter of Charles II. they applied themselves in earnest to local improvements. "June, 1662, first Monday,"

* * "Ordered that a bridge be made over the Mooshasic river, by Thomas Olney, Jr., his dwelling house, John Broune, Edward Smith, Thomas Harris, Jr., John Steere, Epenetus Olney, Thomas Arnold, Thomas Olney, Jr., and George Palmer,

are appointed to get the timber of the said bridge, and to frame it, and then to give notice unto the surveyors, and warn the inhabitants together, to mend the highways and then to rear the said bridge, and this bridge to be done before the next hay time."

This was above the mill, where the stream was narrow. This time, the townsmen relied upon their own mechanical skill. They were not yet able to encounter the difficulties of a bridge over a tidal river.

This ancient bridge was the second public establishment in the Plantations. That it saved much time and distance to the weary yeomen may be inferred from a deed of Thomas Olney, Jr., dated 14th March, 1669, in which he described the mouth of the Wonasquatucket, as being about half a mile westward of the Town of Providence. That the bridge was of no great solidity, would appear from the vote of the Town Meeting, January 27, 1664: "Ordered that John Whipple be sent for, to confer with him about mending the bridge. Ordered that Thomas Harris, Senr., and Valentine Whitman shall go unto all the inhabitants of the Town to see what

they will contribute to the mending of the bridge at Weybossett." The freemen had little to spare even for the most useful public works. "October 26, 1666, R. Williams, Moderator, voted that all who contributed to repairing the Town bridge, are to have liberty to meet, and make orders concerning the same," probably to levy tolls for their own repayment. The public spirit of the townsmen was not yet sufficient to compel them to support this beneficial work out of their own substance. They were content to exact what they could from the wayfarers of Massachusetts. 27 January, 1667, Town Meeting: "Voted and ordered that Mr. Roger Williams shall receive tolls of all *strangers* which shall hereafter pass over the bridge at Wapwaysett, also that of all *inhabitants* of the Town he shall receive what each person is freely willing to contribute towards the supporting of the aforesaid bridge." This was the sole work of its kind, twenty years after Williams had been laid to rest.¹ Another generation accomplished the greatest improvement ever made in the old Town—the bridge at Weybosset.

1. It continues to the present day.

As the people became familiar with their new home, well known regions gained popular names, which they retain at the present day. "Cat Swamp," a haunt of the boys of the first generation, is so styled in a deed recorded (p. 202) in 1668. The designation was even then familiar. "Swan Point" can boast of a like antiquity.¹

Other early names of well known localities have passed away with their owners and with their times. Where were the eminences well known in the deeds of the first proprietors, as "Bewitt's Brow," "Observation Rock," etc.?

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Thomas Olney had acquired a part of the estates of Gregory Dexter, at the North end, and had become one of the chief landholders of his day. His name displaced that of Dexter from the street or lane south of his property. It was called "Dexter's lane"² so

1. April 27, 1685, Town Meeting Records, vol. III., p. 90: "Ordered, that a highway shall be and remain, from the lane called Hearnden's lane, eastward through the place called the Second opening into ye greate Swamp, and so to ye Salt water, about ye poynte called Swann poynt."

2. See Town Meeting records, January 27th, of that year.

late as 1695-6. Soon after it is called "Olney's lane" in the same documents.¹

Notwithstanding complaints of poverty and distress, there were in the first generation some prosperous farmers whose granaries were more spacious than their dwellings. George Fox (Journal) says, that in 1672 he preached "in a great barn, to a great throng of people." Fox had seen agriculture on a large scale, in many parts of England, and knew what a great barn was. He was probably not the first or the last in Providence who availed himself of such structures. His incidental testimony to the capacity of some of them, is more satisfactory than that of a townsman who had forgotten, or had never seen, the homesteads of the fatherland.

But at this point all improvement was interrupted by what was deemed by many, the utter wreck and ruin of the Town. Its abandonment by so many of

1. 27th October, 1656: "Ordered that Epenetus Olney shall have a homelot laid out to him at the head of Mr. Dexter, his lot." Epenetus Olney (son of Thomas) had sufficient influence to procure his admission to a "proprietor's right." He was probably the last who was so admitted. The lot mentioned was, during four generations, the site of the "Olney Tavern," and was, until recently, owned by Olney's posterity.

its citizens, the destruction of property, and the years of poverty which followed Philip's war, were fatal to all hope of expansion, until the work of the old planters had been done over again. But the second generation was not inferior to the first, and in the course of two decades the old storehouses were replenished, former improvements were resumed, and some of the old controversies with them.

In an examination of its earliest documents, our attention is soon arrested by the seclusion of the primitive town. The Dutch were always secret, when not open, enemies. A broad tract of wilderness separated the Plantations from Connecticut, but not broader than the separation established by mutual dislikes. Massachusetts had closed her gates against her exiled dissenters. Plymouth alone showed a timid sympathy. It was one of the earliest efforts of the settlers to mitigate the evil. They opened, at the first opportunity, such highways toward the Seekonk and to the Pawtucket, as might give them the needful intercourse with the only friends which were left.

The origin of some of the most important high-

ways, the first indications of growth and stability, is now scarcely to be traced. The wilderness lay in common and the settlers soon ascertained for themselves where were the shortest lines and the fewest obstacles, and hewed their way through the woods without the formality of a vote in the Town Meeting. After a few years, when much of the Proprietary land had become private estates, and cartways were needed for the transport of their crops, broad highways were "stated" by order of the Town Meeting, *i. e.*, were established by courses and distances, metes and bounds. These followed the same direction as the old bridle-ways, and the surveyors were often directed to "take in the old paths." The new roads were commonly of the width of three or four rods.¹ Their legal establishment is often the earliest notice in the records, of ways which must have been almost coeval with the town.

Two of the most important of these must have been required by the earliest necessities of the townsmen, but we have no account of their beginning. These were, the way to the "Upper Ferry,"

1. See order of the Proprietors, 1654.

(now the Red Bridge), and the "Common Road" or "Country Road," towards Pawtucket. By the ferry was the chief highway to the Plymouth Colony, intercourse with which was always friendly, and often of absolute necessity, while there was as yet little intercourse with Boston. The "common road" opened farther communications with Rehoboth, which then occupied the whole territory between Attleborough and Bristol, and with the not utterly hostile borderers of Massachusetts, who might be inclined to occasional good offices. The fisheries at the Upper Ferry and near Pawtucket Falls, possessed in the early days of the Town an importance which they have long since lost. The "Country Road," or "Common Road" diverged in a northwesterly direction from the Town street, near its northern extremity, curved partly around, and then passed over a sand hill where was afterwards (1700) the public burial place, and then turned northeastwardly towards Pawtucket. It was the earliest means of intercourse with the valley of the Blackstone which it crossed by a ford, at a distance of a mile above the falls. Blackstone and his few neighbours and

the occasional visitors from Massachusetts, must have often journeyed over the route, long before it attracted the attention of the Town Meeting, or afforded occasion for local controversies. Of nearly equal antiquity, was the way to Louisquissuck. This for a short distance followed the course of the "country" or "common road," and then diverged toward the northwest into the Proprietors' woodlands.¹ The whole region at the northwest was, and to a quite recent period continued to be, densely covered with woods. This was the earliest attempt to improve it by public authority. In 1682, (Feb. 19, p. 19,) the Town Meeting had made an order for a highway to be "stated at or about Louisquissuck," "to go up into the country." This vague direction sufficiently indicates the solitude of the woodlands. The "order" was ineffectual and was renewed in the following year. The old North road of two centuries ago, has lost much of its importance, being super-

1. Town Meeting Records, vol. III., pp. 76-77, 1st Monday in June, 1683, "a road through Louisquissuck woods" was ordered to be "stated," but no *termini* or bounds, "also so many other highways as they may judge at present of necessity." The committee, Capt. Arthur Fenner, Capt. William Hopkins, and Joseph Williams, could prosecute the work in the Proprietors' forest, at their discretion.

seded by highways towards villages of which there was then no anticipation. Its chief interest could not have been foreseen by its projectors. Its southernmost portion is now the best known and the most frequented. Under the dismal modern name of Sexton street, it has beheld the last journeys of multitudes who have taken a final leave of the Plantations.

These primitive highways must have been among the earliest efforts of the old agricultural settlers, and yet the first notice of them in the public records occurs some forty years later, when the ancient bridle-paths were first "stated" and widened by the order of the Town.¹

1. July 27, 1671, p. 258. It being the Town's quarter day, Mr. William Carpenter chosen moderator.

"WHEREAS, John Scott hath this day exhibited a bill to your town that they would take some course for the laying out of a highway to Mr. Blackstone's river, where it may be most convenient. It is ordered by the Town that the two surveyors, with Thomas Arnold, Senr., and John Whipple, Senr., do by the last day of August next ensuing, go to John Scott's and survey or lay out a highway to the aforesaid Blackstone's river, for strangers and others to pass to the said river, where it may be the most convenient to pass over the said river—to the best of their understandings, with the least damage as may be to the owners of the said land, to make return thereof to the Town for their ratification of the same."

This is the first order of the Town respecting a highway at Pawtucket.

As the seventeenth century went on, there was some correspondence with Boston, and between Boston and New York, now become an English province. The "Highway" and its tributaries gained additional importance. After the second charter, fears of Massachusetts died away. Increasing comforts brought a desire for friendly intercourse and trade. At the North end of the Town, where were the Town Mill, the tannery, and the houses clustering about it, there were also a few years later, the chief inns, the Courts and the General Assembly. Rehoboth during those years, a larger and more prosperous town than the Plantations, felt much sympathy with their political ideas, and the social relations between them became more intimate. Until Providence had a physician of its own, the few sick or disabled were forced to send to Rehoboth for medical or surgical aid. During the seventeenth century, the chief extension of the Town was in that direction. Providence was now the resting place where travelers halted for the night, on the way to New York, and the "King's Post" carried despatches between Colonial governors along the route of the present

"shore line." In 1678-9, (March,) the Town Meeting, by a grant of land, made provision for a permanent ferry at "Narrow passage," in order that travellers might no longer be delayed in crossing the Seekonk, through the caprice or absence of the neighbours.¹ It will be observed that from that early day those who have done military service for the town, have been among the first to be recompensed by the appointments within its gift.

The establishment of the ferry was the first im-

1. Grant to Andrew Edmunds. 3d March, 1678-9, (p. 16, Town Meeting Records). "It is voted and ordered by ye Towne that whereas Andrew Edmunds hath preferred a bill to ye Towne this day, desiring of ye Towne (in reference to his service done in ye war time), ye accommodation of about two acres of Land for his conveniency near ye waterside at ye place (in ye necke) commonly called ye narrow passage, he chusing it for his conveniency for ye building him a house, he there intending ye keeping of a ferry. The which ye Towne considering of, have seen cause to order, and it is hereby ordered and granted unto ye aforesaid Andrew Edmunds his conveniency, (if it may be) at ye place aforesaid. The quantity of four acres, and not exceeding that computation. And ye surveyor of ye Towne who shall be employed in ye laying out of said land shall see to ye retaining, (there, to ye Towne's use), a suitable and convenient priviledge, (alsoe) notwithstanding. And make returne thereof according to its proper platform thereof, according as ye Towne order doth enjoine ye surveyors, in ye respect of their laying out of land. The which aforesaid quantity of lande by ye Towne granted, being also so layd out as ye Towne's priviledges to ye ferry be not infringed thereby, as before expressed, as provided therein. The said land is hereby given and granted, and to be ye undoubted right of ye said Andrew Edmunds, to him and his heires forever."

provement in the communications with "the Bay." On the 27th of April, 1683, "It is ordered yt ye surveior or surveiors doe with all convenient speede state a highway to ye Narrow passage, and it to take out of any man's land, making it up unto ye said persons, out of ye towne's common, both in quantity and in quality, and said surveiors or surveior shall be paid for ye doing thereof, out of ye Treasury of this Tounce." This was but a widening of the old bridle-path through the woods, required by the increase of travel. No breadth is specified, or direction. Such was not the practice of those days. The surveyors were left to their discretion, only conforming, if possible, to the rule that "every highway be left four poles." By its being the first to gain additional width, we may believe that the road to the Upper Ferry was esteemed the most important highway towards the eastward. It is suggestive of the local jealousies which were as wakeful in those days as in the present, that a year after the opening of the road to the ferry, the Town ordered the old "Common road" to Pawtucket River to be widened and improved. It would seem that the neighbouring land-

holders were at variance among themselves. The order of July 27, 1671, seems to have been ineffectual or unsatisfactory, each one desiring that the improved highway should be near his own house.¹

Both of these early highways to the Upper Ferry and to Pawtucket river, had their origin in the same primitive wants. The last was the occasion of far greater care and expense to the Town.²

1. Town Meeting Records, vol. III., p. 81, "April 28, 1684, being a Quarter Meeting ye 27th day of ye month, falling upon ye first day of ye weeke." "Thomas Olney, Moderator. Whereas, there hath been a bill preferred to ye Toune for stating a common highway or road over Pawtucket River, both for cart drift, horse and foot. It is therefore ordered that ye way over Pawtucket River shall be and remaine at ye ancient and comon roade, at ye end of ye hills on ye western part of John Scot, his planting land or field, ye which leadeth to ye plains on Rehoboth side of ye river called ye Western plaine." p. 84, b. This order seems to have quieted controversy, of which no more appears upon the Town records. It appears by a record of August 21, 1689, pp. 84-85, that the road to Pawtucket River ran a little northward of "where Blaxtun's (Blackstone's) house formerly stood." It had been destroyed by the Indians.

2. A few citations will suffice. Town Meeting Records, 25 June, 1700. Two "surveiors are ordered to report on the Public way over Pawtucket River, and to see what is wanting for making the way passable for coming out of the river when the water is up." Records, vol. I., p. 4. "Town Meeting held at Providence April 29, 1716, it being the Town's Quarter Day. . . Upon a bill presented this day, by Capt. Sylvanus Scott, it is granted that the said Capt. Scott shall have liberty to fence the highway that was the country road over Pawtucket River, provided he make convenient carte gates in the roade, and maintaine them for the space of four years, Provided Pawtucket bridge stands and is passable so long, not else. This is intended only where the highway goeth through his own land."

A community of farmers was, in those days, seldom destitute of topics of controversy about their own boundaries and their neighbours' cattle. The old agricultural Plantations furnished no exception. The safety of their flocks superseded all thoughts of the comfort of travellers. The most ancient streets, then mere cartways, were the subjects of frequent disputes in the Town Meetings. The "Highway," the eastern boundary of the "home-lots," was an especial scene of such contentions. A few citations will enable us to recall the appearance of the farming town in the days of its first and second generations. The negligence of the owners of land upon the Highway required the interposition of the Town to compel the maintenance of proper fences. On the 11th December, 1666, the owners in the "Neck" were peremptorily ordered to attend the Town Meeting on December 25th. This was a dismal occupation for Christmas, but for whatever reason, the meeting was adjourned until January 27, 1666-7. The landholders then appeared, and were well provided with the usual reasons for not doing their legal duty. In spite of their opposition, their

fellow townsmen, "ordered that the fences in the neck be made up by the first of April next." It seems that, however unwillingly, they obeyed.¹ For the greater security of their cattle, the Town Meeting first permitted and then required gates across the Highway, to be set up and maintained by the owners of the adjacent fields. Then (in 1698) the Town ordered all these barriers to be removed, then again to be restored. Votes upon this subject were of no infrequent occurrence, as increase of travel gave annoyance to the owners of bordering estates.² One instance will suffice to show the appearance of the Eastern hill-side, in the latter days of the agricultural town, January 27, 1713. Fencing of the highways at the South end of Providence neck was permitted for five years. Vol. II. p. 17, Quarter Day, 28th April, 1717: " * * On reading a bill presented by Messrs. Nicholas Power, Benjamin Tillinghast, Samuel Winsor, Joseph Whipple, Joseph and Rich-

1. See also Town Meeting Records, April, 1694.

2. Fencing was troublesome and expensive in those days, when laborers were few. The fences and gates in the highways were among the most frequent subjects of contention during the whole period of the agricultural town. Only a few specimens have been cited.

See Town Meeting Records, November, 1698, February, 1704.

ard Fenner, and Mr. Richard Browne, for the liberty to fence in the highway, with their land at the lower end of the Neck, for the space of five years more, as it hath been the five years last past. It is voated and graunted, provided the petitioners or their partners make and maintaine a couple of carte gates for the conveniency of public passage in ye highway."

There were gates across Power's lane (now Power street), as well as across the highway, many years after this order. It appears from the Records of January 19, 1739, that there was a gate in the Highway across what is now called Meeting street. In that year, "the Highway that leadeth from Providence Town House" (*i. e.*, the first Court House in Gaol lane,) only extended to Ferry lane, now Hope street, and was there closed by a gate.¹

The "Highway at the head of the Lots," was barred like a private way across a farm. No greater regard was paid to the convenience of travellers toward Massachusetts. July 20, 1720, the Town Meeting voted that "Harnden's lane and the highway

1. The Court House in Gaol lane was ordered by the Town Meeting, 27 Jan., 1729-30, and finished in 1731.

thence to Pawtucket, be fenced for five years, provided sufficient gates be set up and maintained in said lane for horses and carts to pass through, as well as footmen." At a later day, as we shall note, it was thought necessary to secure the tranquillity of Benefit street in a like manner. With the exception of the Town street, the most ancient highways of the Plantations were in a state of barricade until a late period of the last century. The Upper Ferry, after the mill and the bridge at Wapwaysett, was the third public institution of the Town. During three generations, the few adventurous travellers of the Town street went on horseback through Power's or Olney's lane, by the Highway, afterwards called "Ferry lane," down the easterly part of what is now Angell street, to Rehoboth, Attleborough and Boston. They could choose their own hours and journey at their leisure, for there were no public conveyances until more than half of the last century had gone by.¹

1. Madam Knight's Journey to New York. She was two days on the road from Boston to Providence. She travelled under the escort of the "King's Post," who went armed on account of the dangers of the way. The "King's Post" doubtless went by the most populous and level country. Both going and returning she passed over the "Upper Ferry." See Madam Knight's Journey, pp. 15, 67, 68, A. D. 1704.

Little more was done during the remainder of the seventeenth century for the improvement of the East side of the "Salt River." It was merely for the convenience of the neighbourhood, that the Town Meeting, (21 August, 1684,) directed Thomas Olney to "state the highway from the head of the lane called Dexter's lane, and so through the Great Swanpe from ye said lane." The ways leading to the Seekonk, excepting the three original ones, Olney, Meeting and Power streets, are comparatively of recent origin.¹

The centre of historical interest in the old Plantations is the primitive "Town Streete." It was long the abode of every citizen of note or influence, and was the subject as well as the scene of some of the early controversies of the freemen. Its government and regulation furnished the model for those of the other highways, and to observe its fortunes, is to watch the development of the town.

The old voluntary association of the first purchas-

1. On the map, by Daniel Anthony, (1803), there appears no street between Olney's lane and Meeting street, and only three, then very recent ones, are between Meeting street and Power's lane.

ers did little for each other's comfort. It was not until the incorporation of the town, (1649), that any thought was bestowed upon such subjects. The Town street was continually flooded by currents of rain or melting snow from the abrupt hill-side. These were confined by no definite channels, and poured down from the narrow lanes and from the unoccupied home-lots. With mingled economy and resignation, the householders endured the evil. At length, on the "4th of the 12th month," 1649, (probably urged by the experience of a severe winter,) their patience failed them, and the Town Meeting "ordered that every man shall mend and make good the highway before his house-lot or lots, within the compass of this neck, so that carts may pass and repass freely, and the said highways shall be mended before the first of May, next, as they well ought, even at their will," *i. e.*, if the owners were left to their own discretion. It will be observed that the first difficulties were overcome, and that in 1649, the townsmen were well supplied with oxen. This is the earliest regulation of Providence streets. The duty of repairing them must have been but negligently performed, as

it was left to the zeal and diligence of the neighbouring owner, not quickened by any penalties. That the patriarchs of the Town were as little careful of their own security, as are any of their successors in these latter days, may be inferred from the following vote of the 28th, 5th month, 1651: "Robert Williams, Moderator, * Ordered that no man shall fall any trees, to offend any cartway, unless he take it off in twenty-four hours, and if any man shall do so, he shall forfeit 3s. 4d." The perils of moonless nights and unlighted highways, must have been formidable when lenity was shown to carelessness like this. As time went on the townsmen found it necessary to stimulate the activity of their brother freemen, and to define their duties. On the first Monday of June, 1664, (p. 173,) it was ordered that "every man in this Town which hath a team shall work one day a year with it at the highways." "Every housekeeper which hath no team, is to work two days a year at the highways." This would have been an indifferent provision even for a country road. With nothing better, a much frequented street must have been sometimes scarcely endurable. Both the duty and

the penalty were made more severe in the following year¹: "Forasmuch as there hath been a great neglect in mending and repairing the highways of this Town, it is therefore ordered by this present assembly, that from this day forward every house-keeper in this Town shall work three days in a year at the highways, in case the surveyors see that there be need of so many days, and that all those that have teams, that is, four oxen, if the surveyors see there be occasion, and they who have but a yoke of oxen to come with them, and that in case that any person shall refuse or neglect coming upon the warning of the surveyors, he shall forfeit 2*s.* 6*d.* for each day's neglect, unto the Town Treasury, and those who have oxen, to forfeit 1*s.* 6*d.* for a yoke, and those who neglect to come, or to send one to work in their room, shall be taken notice of by the surveyors, their names to be taken down and returned unto any one of the Assistants who shall grant forth a warrant to the constable to distrain the fine aforesaid. But if any person neglecting coming to work either themselves, or with oxen, if they can excuse

1. April 27, 1665, vol. I., Deeds and Transcripts, p. 177.

themselves justly, either by sickness, or their oxen cannot be found, or sufficient excuse satisfactory to the Assistants, then to be free. Also that the surveyors give the inhabitants at least three days' notice, but if the surveyors be found defective in their office in not warning people to come to work, and otherwise looking to their charge, then for the said surveyors to forfeit 5*sh.* for each day's neglect, that is, the three days aforesaid the which shall be distrained as aforesaid, but it is to be minded that the surveyors' teams are to go free."

A comparison of the phraseology of these orders seems to indicate that the townsmen of the first generation were as skillful in technical excuses, and in colorable or pretended service, as their successors in later days.

Nothing more effectual than this was done during seventy years more. The commercial period of the Town had now begun, and with increasing wealth and taxes a new generation insisted upon a more efficient magistracy. On the 11th of August, 1735,¹ the townsmen spoke their minds thus: "Whereas there

1. Vol. IV., p. 54, Town Meeting Records.

is few people that has any regard to doeing their duty in mending his Majesty's highways in this Town, for remedy whereof, for the futer, it is hereby ordered that such persons in this Town that are required by law to find a single hand, to work upon said highways, shall pay the sum of five shillings currant money for one day's defect, and those that are liable by law to finde a teame shall pay the sum of 14 shillings for one day's defect, and in case the work for repaireing said ways at any time shall not require a teame, then two able hands shall be required in lue thereof, and in default of appearance, being legally warned, shall pay a fine of five shillings for each man's defect." That the householders of that day knew how to evade a disagreeable duty, is evident, for it is farther "ordered, that it shall be in the discretion of any one of the surveyors of the highways that hath the charge of the work then in hand, to judge of the sufficiency of such hands as shall appeare, and if he judge any of them not sufficient to performe a day's work, he may refuse to accept of them, and it shall be judged no appearance." This was but a partial remedy. The evil remained,

while the Townsmen had become impatient of ills which former generations had borne in silence. "March ye 1st Day, Anno Dom., 1735-6, it being Monday the Meeting is again in being. * * It is voated and ordered that the owner of every house out of whose celler the water brakes forth, that is on the East side of the Towne Streete, shall, as soon as he *conveniently can*, make some subterraneous passage for such water, by which it may be conveyed into the River of this Town."¹ Expensive works of this sort, to be undertaken by each householder according to his own plan and his own means, were never "convenient," and the Town's order remained a dead letter, like many others at that day. The reflection of a few months more, convinced the freemen that if they hoped for comfort or safety in their chief highway, they must assume the care of it in their corporate capacity, and by the agency of their own officials. July 27, 1736, vol. IV., Town Meeting Records, pp. 60-61: "It is voated and ordered that Col. Daniel Abbott, and Capt. William Hopkins draw up sumthing in order for the Toune to vote at their next meeting, that

1. Page 56, vol. IV.

may be proper for a remedy, to cleare our Tounne Streete, and so to keep it cleare." The committee performed their duty, and at the next meeting, 27th October, 1736, proposed the first street regulations which proved effectual. Among them were prohibitions of the storage or deposit of merchandise or combustibles, as shingles, clapboards, etc., in the Town street, and the appointment of officers with sufficient authority to secure the proper care of the highway. The assumption of the charge of the Town street was an important advance in municipal government. It was an abandonment of the early reliance upon individual discretion, which had deprived the old Plantations of all coercive authority. Little more could be expected at that day, for no city in the world was then distinguished by a care for the cleanliness and safety of its streets. Nothing more was done during many years. Another generation passed away before there was a sidewalk, much less a pavement. The pavements first laid down late in the last century, were of large round stones, and the sidewalk, where it was anything but a mere bank of earth, was of the same material.

Along the middle of the street ran a long line of stones of larger size, which was called the "*crown of the causeway*." Along this narrow footpath, ladies, and people who were more than usually careful of the safety of their clothes, picked their way in wet weather. Some attracted notice, by using it at all times. The number of vehicles in the Town street was not then sufficient to endanger the adventurous foot passenger. Yet, during a century and a half, the devout reader of Bunyan, as he meditated upon sufferings so like his own, could cherish a lively sympathy with his brother pilgrim in the "slough of Despond."¹

During the first sixty years, the original conception of the Town street remained unexecuted. As we have thus far viewed it, it had but one side. In modern phrase, it was a *shore road*. Long after the Indian war, the townsman from the North End, who came down to a meeting held on a June day, under

1. The legislature granted a lottery in February, 1761, for the first pavements in Providence. R. I. Col. Records, vol. VI., p. 269.

When the late Mr. Howland first knew Providence in 1771, the pavements extended from the old Crawford house, opposite Crawford street, northward to the Quaker Meeting house, and westward to Dorrance street, then called "Muddy Dock."

the buttonwood tree,¹ had everywhere a near view of the water-side, on his right hand. Half way down the hill he came to the falls of the Mooshassuc,—then by the river, yet retaining its ancient breadth, at the foot of the steep ravine,—next by the cove with its clam beds, the hill and marshes of Weybossett,—and below them, upon the “great Salt River.” Eager as were many of the early Proprietors, to turn their estates to some account, few, if any, “warehouse lots” were sold before Philip’s war. These derived their names from warehouses which existed only in the fond anticipations of the settlers. In 1681, the “Towne streete” is styled, in an act of Assembly, “the streete lyeing against the great river in the Town of Providence,” no warehouses then intercepting the view. One of the earliest landholders who sought to avail himself of their advantages, was Pardon Tillinghast, a successor of Williams, in the small Society which he had founded. The care of it did not interfere with his pursuit of the good things of this world. On the 27th of January, 1679-80, “On petition of Pardon Tillinghast, a piece of land

1. Opposite Crawford street.

20 foot square is granted to him for building him a store house, with privilege of a wharfe, over against his dwelling place." This was where is now the foot of Transit street. He was thus preparing to become one of the earliest merchants of the Town. During some years, he found few imitators. In 1698, (January 27, 1697-8,) the lots on the west side of the Town street, are termed in the Town Meeting Records, "lands by the sea-side." But in the same year, there are indications of a new age, for an eager competition for warehouse lots enlivened the Town Meeting.¹ "Several bills were depending for grants of forty foot lots, called Warehouse lots." At this time the "Proprietors," the successors to Williams's Indian title to the Plantations conducted their affairs in open Town Meeting, and as a part of the public business. They were alarmed at a proposal to distribute among the freeholders at large, lots in the best portion of their estate. As they held the control of the Town Meeting, they were able to dictate its answer to the petitioners. "Having fully considered the matter, and concluded that equality

1. February 7, 1697-8.

ought to be propagated, to enclose according to their propriety," (*i. e.*, their proprietorship,) a committee was appointed "to consider the matter, and to ripen things concerning it." This was in fact, a determination by the one hundred proprietors, in view of the increasing demand, to make a dividend of the whole shore among themselves, whether they intended to become traders or otherwise, and to offer none of it to public sale. The project was fortunately unsuccessful. But some of the more enterprising of their number, obtained grants of warehouse lots, and proceeded to build upon them. The less influential proprietors persisted in their claims to the equality, which, in 1697-8, their associates had resolved to be their due, but not until 1749 (April 3d) were they gratified with gifts of warehouse lots, and thus made equal with their more energetic brethren.

Thus began the early commerce of the Town. But it was long before the Plantations saw any vigorous development from this feeble beginning. The warehouse lots were subject to so little regulation, that in 1704, the Town street had no very definite boundary, and the owners set their buildings as they

pleased on its Western side. It was therefore voted that "the Town street be four poles wide." (1704.)

During the first two generations the voyages of the settlers were not longer than between the Town street and the villages on the Bay. As the highways were mere bridle paths through the woods, the speediest intercourse was by canoes and boats. These lay along the shore of the Town street, fastened to stakes or iron rings, or stranded on the beach at low water. Williams usually went to his trading house at Narragansett by sea. On one of his voyages, his canoe was overturned, his goods were lost and he narrowly escaped with his life.¹ During the seventeenth century there was little need of wharves. Many years after the settlement, says Governor Ward,² with all its maritime advantages, Rhode Island had no navigation. The legislative commissioners, assembled at Warwick, (November 5, 1658,) say, "ourselves are not in a capacity to send out shipping of ourselves." They were, in fact dependent upon Massachusetts, or upon occasional Dutch

1. Williams to Winthrop, May 9, 1649.

2. R. I. Col. Records, before cited.

traders for nearly all manufactured articles. The Massachusetts Puritans would have used their commercial advantage as a means of retaliation. In revenge for Rhode Island's refusal to expel the Quakers,¹ they threatened to discontinue all intercourse, and thus to deprive Rhode Island of comfortable subsistence. "We have not," said the Rhode Island legislature, "English coin, but only that which passeth among these barbarians," "as corn, cattle, tobacco, and the like, to make payments in, which they," (the Massachusetts people,) "will have at their own rate, or else not deal with us."²

A few years later, Williams was forced to row to Newport, in order to dispute with the Quakers, although he needed to reserve all his strength for the conflict before him. His antagonists, with their unfailing instinct for the comforts of both worlds, had secured all the available means of conveyance for

1. Portsmouth, March 13, 1657.

2. Something of this ill fortune was due to their useless and incessant controversies. At this very time Williams was distracting the Colony with a prosecution against Harris, for treason against Oliver Cromwell. These and other causes of the ill success of the Plantations, will be considered at large, in a future paper.

themselves. He was more fortunate on his return, being able to take passage in a sail boat, then the largest Rhode Island vessel. Until the seventeenth century was waning to its close, no sloops or schooners, save those of Massachusetts and New York enlivened the waters of the Bay. The ancient townsmen smoked their pipes in the cool of the day, in front of their dwellings, on the east side of the Town street. From the elevation upon which these stood, the householders looked across the vacant warehouse lots, down upon their clam-beds and canoes, made themselves miserable over the latest affronts of Massachusetts or the Indians, discussed the secession of Coddington, the rise and fall of the English Commonwealth, and the disputes of Williams, Harris and Gorton, amid the annoyance of clouds of mosquitoes which arose from the marshes of the west side, and were almost a counterbalance for the blessings of religious liberty. Very slowly the old farming town awakened to a perception of the commercial value of the Bay. At the close of the century came the first evidence of progress and material improvement. A few "warehouses" had

been erected upon lots at the north and south ends of the river side. They were not of capacity sufficient to give much liveliness to trade, but they alarmed the conservative spirits who now ruled the Plantations, with dark forebodings as to the future. There had been no provision of ways from the Town street to the Salt River. The warehouse lots were in immediate contact with each other, and if they should be built up and occupied, all except their owners, would be shut out from the water-side, and from their chief resort for meadow and pasturage—the fields of Weybossett. The demand for warehouse lots awakened the attention of the Town Meeting, and in June, 1704, a preventive was devised for the evils which the new commercial spirit threatened to bring upon the Town. A reservation was made of all the warehouse lots between the site chosen for the ancient Town wharf, (where is now Crawford street,) and the house of Thomas Olney, near the present Steeple street, and of the corresponding shore on the west side. The vote of the Town Meeting, by which all this property was dedicated to the public use, affords a glimpse of life in the old agricultural town.

THE RESERVATION.¹

" At a Toun's quarter day Meeting, July ye 27th, 1704, Major Willm Hopkins, Moderator.

" * * * Whereas there is continual pressing upon the Toune by people for grants of warehouse lots by the salt water side, along the Toune Streete in our Toune of Providence the purchasers and proprietors now met together on this our Quarter day, having taken this matter into consideration, how greatly detrimentall it will prove and be unto the Toune if so there should be a grant of warehouse lotts, all along the salt water by the Toune Streete, by reason that people thereby would be so much obstructed of Recoursè to and from the water side, as they have continuall occation for; and more especially from the Southern part of Thomas ffield his home-lot, which lieth next to Gideon Crawford's lott, and so up Northward, because there is so constant a passing to and from the Toun side to Wayboysett side, cross the water, and from Wayboysett side to the Toune with cannooes and Boates, Rideing and Carting and

1. Town Meeting Records, vol. I., pp. 54-55.

Swiming over of cattell, from side to side; and the streame oftentimes running so swift, and many times Rough water by Reason of stormy winds, whereby neither cannooes, Boates nor cattell swimming, can make any certain place to land, but must land where they can git on shore, which if the land by the shore were appropriated, it would hinder any landing, and so damage accrew. Therefore for the preventing of what inconveniencies, otherwise might Ensue, and for that a free Recourse may be, cross ye sd water, without impediment of landing where the shore is made, and for that carts, horses, people and cattell may up and doune the banke, from the streete to the water and from the water to ye streete have free Recourse. Be it Enacted and ordered and it is hereby Enacted and ordered by the Purchasers and Proprietors aforesaid, That from this day henceforward there shall not at any time be any land appropriated by any person, which lieth upon the side of the Salt water by the Toune Streete, from the piece of land laid out for a Toune wharfe to be,¹ which is

1. The home-lot of Thomas Field was on the east side of the Town street, opposite to the present Crawford street. The "Reservation" mentions a project, for a second Toun wharf. The design was never carried into effect.

against the Southern part of the sd Thomas Field, his said home-lot, There from a bigg Rock up the River, northward along the Toune Streete, unto the North side of the now Thomas Olney, Senior, his house lott, the which was formerly his father's dwelling place. And that there shall not be any grant made at any time, to any person whatsoever, of any warehouse lott, or parcell of land called by any other denomination, lieing and being between the aforesaid Toune Wharfe Place and the North side of the said Thomas Olney, his said lott; but that all the land lieing and being betweene those two places, all along betweene the salt water, and the west end of the Home lotts which belong unto people, shall be and continually remaine in comon for the use and benefit of people as aforesaid and that there may be a free Recourse also, on Wayboyset side, to the salt water for passage or what improve else may be made of the same (?) by people, or for cattell coming to the salt water, Travelling on foote, or on horseback, carting, fferrieing, &c., Be it further enacted and ordered by the Purchasers and Proprietors aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted and ordered that all that little

neck of land which may properly be called Wayboysett Neck which hath Nathaniell Waterman, his salt marsh and the East End of a Cassyway (causeway) on the West and the Salt water on the South and South West, and also the Salt water on the East, and on the North and Norwest shall perpetually lye and be in Comon, and shall not be in any part of it appropriated to any person whatsoever, at any time. Neither shall there be any grant made thereof, nor of any part thereof for warehouse lots, nor portion of land under what denomination soever, unto any person or persons, But that the said Neck of land and Every part thereof, shall be and Remaine continually in Comon, for the use and Benefit of people as aforesaid."

The reservation was larger than its purpose required and did not last very long. Probably the very assembly which established it did not anticipate its continuance, for at the same meeting, (July 27, 1704,) an attempt was made to revive the project of a bridge at Weybossett. The inconvenience of the old bridge at Wapwaysett (1662) was soon perceived. Some efforts had been made for the establishment of

another route, both shorter and nearer to the meadows, George Shepard had given lands to the Town for this purpose, but in 1675, he petitioned the Town Meeting "that his grant might be returned as the Town had built no bridge at Weybossett, which is done." Such a work was beyond the reach of the capital or engineering skill of those days. From the western side of the river, (where Weybosset street now begins,) and opposite to the present square, a point projected and narrowed the stream. It has now disappeared in the widening of the whole western shore. Its extremity was where the Washington Buildings now stand. It was called Weybosset point. It gave greater velocity to the current, and by directing it toward the Eastern shore, caused there a corresponding recession. The tide ebbed and flowed up to the Town street, and the earlier bridges were much longer than the present. When the foundations of the "Franklin House" were laid, (1820), the workmen uncovered a rock bearing an iron staple and ring, once used for securing canoes and boats—the last vestige of the primitive harbour. The project of a bridge of such length and of the

requisite stability was somewhat in advance of the times. It was, however, foreshadowed long before. In the following brief entries may be seen the first rude beginning of the present centre of the town: 2d January, 1681,¹ "Voated by ye Toune, that there be a sufficient highway kept for ye Towne's use, of three poles wide from ye Toune Streete to ye water-side, yt ye Toune may, if they see cause, set up a wharfe at ye end of it, in the most convenient place that may be." They did "see cause," and ninety years later, when the Market House was built, the Market, Bridge and Town wharf stood side by side.

At the Town Meeting, 27th July, 1704, the subject was resumed by some of the principal townsmen. We may infer from the phraseology of the following resolution that the meeting felt great doubts of their success: "Whereas, by several persons of this Toune, it was this day proposed to said Toune by bill, that the Toune would make a choice of two persons to enquire of the inhabitants of Providence, and also of other persons elsewhere in the country, to see what they will contribute to

1. Records, p. 58, of that year. See also December 14, 1681.

the building of a bridge, from the Toune side of the Salt water in Providence Toune, beginning against the west end of the lott whereon Daniell Abbott, his dwelling house standeth, and so across the water, unto the hill called Wayboysett, and for that service the Toune have nominated Gideon Crawford and Joseph Whipple, (if they see cause to accept it,) and to make returne unto the Toune of their success at the Quarter Day in January next." Their curiosity was soon satisfied. The people would give nothing, and the wharf and "boates" served some years longer.¹

But a spirit of enterprise was now awakened, and the bridge at Weybossett, with its draw, was built, and the progress of the town made sure.² Of the

1. The following vote of the Town Meeting of this period may give some conception of the state of the present centre of the Town,—of the amount of communication with Weybossett, and of the obstacles with which it was threatened: "Thomas Olney, Moderator. * * Whereas James Angell, Philip Tillinghast and some others having desired to set up a ware in the Salt River, at Weybossett to take fish in. But several persons objecting—if it should be, it would impede the passage cross ye said river, and hinder the Recourse up and down said River, with boates, and cannooes, and also that a former order in our Toune made would not permit of any such allowance. In consideration whereof, ye Toune do not see cause to make any such grant."—Vol. I., p. 60, Town Meeting Records, February 11, 1705-6.

2. A. D. 1711-12.

cost, the architect, and the design of this structure we are uninformed. All such details have perished with the lost papers of the Town. The first bridge was longer, narrower, and less substantial than its successors. Such as it was, the townsmen, with the notions about taxes then prevailing, found it a burden which they could ill sustain. At the Quarter Day, 28th of April, 1717, it was voted to petition the Assembly in the Town's behalf, for assistance out of the General Treasury, towards the repairing of Weybossett bridge. Happily, the Colony refused its aid, and thus gave to the Town a lesson of activity and self-reliance, which has long ago ceased to be required. On the 6th of January, 1719, the freemen "ordered that the Justices of this Town proceed according to the Statute 22d Henry ye 8th, cap. ye 5th, for the repairing of the bridge at Weybossett." There must have been some dissension, and reluctance to contribute, which induced a resort to this severe old statute, authorizing impressment instead of employing men and cattle by an ordinary vote. The Town did not soon again apply to the Legislature for its aid, and was all the better for its refusal.

With the building of Weybossett bridge the need of the reservation as a mere landing place was no longer felt. The proprietors soon yielded to the increasing demands for warehouse lots, with which the more wealthy or ambitious citizens were pressing them on every side. Before the middle of the last century the whole reservation had passed into private ownership, except the remnant known in later days as "Market Square." We may well regret that a larger fragment was not preserved for the service and ornament of the Town.

With the sale of the warehouse lots on the west side of the Town street there was still no anticipation of the needs of a commercial town. The earlier proprietors had established no by-ways or lanes from the Town street to the water side of the future, but the warehouse lots were still in immediate contact. It was left for the next generation to remedy the inconvenience at its own cost, and by the light of its own experience. Even then, the provision was only for the wants of the day, without any forecast of the future. Narrow gangways of about twelve feet in width, were opened from the Town street to the

water side, at intervals of every two lots. These ways lay at right angles with the winding Town street, and so were not parallel. In some instances they widely diverged, in others closely approached each other. Thus abundant material for legal controversy was provided by the earlier merchants of the last century, for the annoyance of their successors. The old alleys of the Town street are thus of no great antiquity. They originated in the wants of the commercial town, when the last century was well advanced. Many of them appear in the Proprietors' "Plat of Providence Town Street," of 1746, a few are of later date.¹ They recall the humble beginning of a foreign trade which was content with thoroughfares like these.

The Records give an occasional illustration of the wants of the commercial town during its early days. During more than eighty years, the Plantations were enlivened by no sound of clock or bell.

How the first generations measured their hours we are left to conjecture. When Williams disputed with the "Foxians," at Newport, in 1672, it was agreed that

1. See Town Meeting Records, 1770.

each party should be heard in turn, for a quarter of an hour. A difficulty at once arose. No clock was available in Newport, and the whole population who flocked to the debate, had not a watch at their disposal,¹ "for unless we had Clocks and Watches and quarter-Glasses (as in some Ships) it was impossible to be exactly punctual: however by Gods help I said I would study such *Exactness*, that I would rather omit much I had to say then fail in my promise to them." The privation was long endured. The people were not in worse plight than those of most English villages. Few in those days had watches, but the village church tower had very commonly its sun dial. By whose benevolence they were set up in the Plantations we are not informed. As there is no mention of them in the Town Records, they were probably due to private liberality. In 1735, George Taylor, "the church schoolmaster,"² was allowed by the Town Meeting the use of the upper story of the "County House," in Kings, now Meeting street.

1. This fact is worthy of consideration, in determining the genuineness of some asserted relics of the founders of Rhode Island. *Vide* Nar. Club, vol. V., pp. 105-106.

2. He taught during many years (1731-1774) the day school, which was a part of the English church mission in Providence.

One of the conditions of his occupancy was, that he should keep in repair the sun-dial in the street. In view of the habits of school boys in those, and in later, days this was an undertaking of no little hazard. At this time there were one or two other dials in the Town street, before the houses of prominent citizens. A few years later they were sold with other brass ware in the shops of the Town street. It would be in vain to enquire for them in the Cheapside of to-day. With all their inaccuracies, they served a useful purpose when clocks were few, and watches scarcely known. After 1730, the bell of King's (now St. John's) Church added something to the liveliness, it may be to the security of the Town. It waited forty years longer for a public clock, which was the gift of a liberal citizen.¹

When, in the early decades of the last century, the commercial period began, the growth of the Town street went on steadily but slowly, and by degrees which cannot now be accurately traced. The second village which arose after Philip's war, disappeared like its predecessor. Some few specimens of

1. Joseph Brown, in 1774.

the rebuilding—houses of later date, but fashioned like their predecessors, even now recall the Town street of the early commercial days. The first houses on its east side stood somewhat above its level, looking across their narrow grass plats, down upon the street and river. When larger dwellings succeeded them, the earth was cut away, in many places, leaving the houses upon an elevated bank. Remains of this are still visible in many places, showing the abrupt ascent of the ancient hill, as at the foot of Power street, Waterman street, Meeting street, and St. John's Church-yard. On the east side of the way were all the homesteads. The whole west side of the Town street was devoted to mercantile purposes, as the title—the "warehouse lots" indicated. It long retained its original character. Late in the last century trade was still on the west side of the street, and the east side was as exclusively occupied by dwellings. It could not have been agreeable or always safe, to build upon a slope where houses must have been set upon piles, or a tide a little higher than usual (in the yet unembanked river) might invade the kitchen fires.

Down to the early years of the *Providence Gazette* there were very few shops on the east side of the Town street, but there the earliest merchants of the Town lived, over against their "warehouses" and vessels. It was not until near the end of the last century, that increase of trade required many shops on the east side of the way. Many of the oldest houses yet standing there, which now have basements with entrances from the sidewalk had none at the time of their erection.

The sales of warehouse lots were not frequent until 1717-18. Twenty years later the Town was reaching a prosperity until then unknown. In 1737, the sales by the proprietors were numerous, and at the end of its first century, the Town street was built up and occupied on both sides. One of the earliest houses on its west side, exclusively occupied as a residence, was that of Gabriel Bernon. It was built in 1721, upon the "Spring lot," nearly opposite St. John's Church. The lots to the northward of it had been but recently sold by the proprietors, and there was no building as yet between his dwelling and the old Baptist Meeting-house, where is now the north side of Smith street.

The spirit of improvement once awakened, there was early in the last century, a demand for sites near the Town Mill, and for access to the valley of the Mooshassuc, and the country beyond. But the Proprietors, who held a monopoly of the unsold lands, awaited their own time. They determined to reserve for themselves all benefits from the increase of the Town. Instead of offering for sale their lands on the west side to persons who might improve them, they, in 1718-19, caused their property in Waybossett Neck to be surveyed, and divided among themselves—to each owner a lot or share, separated by narrow alleys like those of the Town street. They were thus in some measure responsible for the slowness of the growth of the west side. They sold no lots northward of the site of Mill bridge until 1718,¹ nor was there a street in that direction. There was a bridle-path from the Town street to the Mill, sufficient for the conveyance of sacks of grain, and a like passageway to the river side. On the 19th of June, 1710, the Town Meeting ordered a site to be selected for a bridge

1. See Staples's Annals, p. 37.

near the Town Mill, but nothing farther was done. Everything in the Plantations followed tradition and precedent, and either began or ended in controversy. The townsmen long doubted whether any extension in a north westerly direction were desirable, and what was the proper method of making it. The bridge was not built until 1733, by which time, we may believe, all doubts were satisfactorily resolved. The highway from the Town street to the bridge over Mill river, was laid out and accepted, 13 March, A. D. 1738.¹

1. The slowness with which the old Town proceeded with measures conducive to its own growth, is illustrated by the building of this road and bridge. September 24, 1733, "Ordered, that a highway be laid out from the Toune Streete to the bridge that is lately built over the Mill River." The committee to lay out the new road were Mr. Daniel Abbott, Mr. Joseph Angell, and Mr. William Turpin. They probably encountered the usual opposition, or differed in their views, and the townsmen were forced to content themselves during sometime longer with the old causeway. For on the 3d December, 1737, no notice being taken of the previous proceedings, "a highway is ordered from the Toune Streete to the North, or Northwestward, to the Eastern end of the bridgg, called Mill bridgg." A new committee—Nathaniel Jenckes, Joseph Brown and John Hawkins, accomplished the work which had been too great for their predecessors. This was a prosperous year. The proprietors then commenced selling lots in this region, and their deeds at this period are very numerous.

Vol. III., Town Meeting Records, p. 211.

The appearance of enterprise among the townsmen soon attracted emigrants of greater value than some of the loquacious disputants of former days. As we have seen, until the seventeenth century was waning to its close, no sloops or schooners, save those of Massachusetts or New York, enlivened the waters of the bay. Providence had now a shipwright of her own, and for him she was indebted to the intolerance of Massachusetts. The first of the craft here, was Nathaniel Brown. His ancestors had been early residents and magistrates of Plymouth.¹ Mr. Brown was long a resident of Rehoboth, and built many vessels at Bullock's cove, in that town, not far below Field's point. There he owned a considerable estate. With many others, he became a partaker in the reaction against Puritanism in the early years of the last century, and became a convert to the Church of England. He was imprisoned at Bristol for refusing to pay a tax for the support of the established religion. He left Massachusetts, and was welcomed in Providence. On the 28th of January, 1711, the Town "granted one-half acre on Waybosset Neck, on salt water, to

1. Savage's Genealogical Dictionary.

Nathaniel Browne, so long as he shall use it for building vessels." Finding this insufficient, the Town Meeting enlarged their grant. On the 8th of November, 1711, "granted one half an acre in Waybosset neck, to Nathaniel Brown, so long as he continues to carry on that business." He long continued to "carry it on," with success. His vessels were among the first which sailed from Providence for the West Indies and the Spanish Main.¹ His house of two stories, with a huge brick chimney at its northern end, was one of the best of its day. It stood next south of St. John's Church-yard, and was removed, during the summer of 1842. Mr. Brown was one of the earliest benefactors of the church. He gave to it, out of his landed property, (which extended from the Town street to the "Highway,") the site upon which it stands. He was also a contributor to its funds. The rigors of Massachusetts law, by expelling a valuable citizen, gave efficient aid to the commerce of Providence.²

1. See Backus's History of the Baptists, vol. I., p. 538. Backus's Appendix, p. 10, concerning the imprisonment of N. Brown and others.

2. The business thus introduced was not unprofitable. One of Mr. Brown's successors, "Roger Kinnicut, shipbuilder," died August 6, 1751, leaving a personal estate of £1,008 18s.

As an indication of increasing wealth, the Plantations had, with the beginning of their commercial period, a physician of their own. John Greene, of Salem, who had been regularly bred as a surgeon and who had practiced in Salisbury, England, came to Providence in 1637. He was a valuable acquisition to the settlers, but he soon left the Plantations, and bore a chief part in the establishment of Warwick. Long after his departure, the townsmen had no resource but to send for him in any case requiring medical or surgical aid. When we remember the state of medical practice in that age, perhaps the want of such counsel was a privation which might be borne with patience. But there must have been, sometimes, great suffering from the accidents inevitable in the clearing of a new country, when the kindly aid of nature could give no relief. In such cases nothing could be done until a messenger had been despatched to Old Warwick, and returned with John Greene, the surgeon, after a day lost in the journeying of that time.¹ Williams was in the habit of consulting with Governor Winthrop, of Connecti-

1. Williams to Winthrop, 1660.

cut, who was versed in the science of his day, and sent to him, as to an intimate friend, for such powders as he kept or could prepare. Williams had some medical books, understood the use of common remedies, and was in the habit of prescribing for his neighbours in cases of no extraordinary difficulty. But in the case of his young daughter (June 13, 1649,) he writes to Governor Winthrop, enquiring, whom among all "the Bay physicians," he should address, on her behalf.¹ She was for a considerable time under medical treatment in Boston.²

In the next generation we find little notice of the medical profession. There were here, as everywhere, in new countries, practitioners who learned by observation the ordinary symptoms and remedies, and whose treatment of disease made up in vigour what it lacked in science. It is not greatly to be deplored that the hardy constitutions of those days, were left to their own resources. The longevity of that age equalled that of any of its successors. The Town Records preserve no traces of any early physician

1. Williams to Winthrop, December 10, 1649.

2. See Williams to Winthrop, 22d June 1645, pp. 143-4.

until 1720. In that year the Town "Voted due Dr. John Jones, £1 10s., for the cure of Richard Collins, *when he is well.*" Of Dr. Jones and his professional learning, we know nothing. He was employed by the Town in caring for its poor, but with this disagreeable uncertainty as to his compensation.

Whoever in the earlier decades of the last century desired the best medical or surgical aid, sent to Rehoboth for Dr. Jabez Bowen. As the superior in wealth and education, Rehoboth had, long before Providence, a physician of its own, whose services were in request throughout the surrounding country. Dr. Bowen had held prominent political offices in Massachusetts, but such was now the growth of the Plantations, that he removed thither, and was the first regularly educated practitioner in medicine and surgery, who permanently resided in the Town. His celebrity was widespread. A large landed estate preserved in the next generation the memory of his professional success. He was the owner of the entire property through which now passes the street bearing his name. He was long conspicuous in the politics of the Town and Colony. His obituary and

epitaph, in the style admired by that generation, attest that he held no inconsiderable place in the regard of his contemporaries.¹

With occasional incidents like these, the commercial town grew up, but by degrees scarcely to be perceived. No archives of the Colonial Custom house remain, which could give distinctness to the view. We read in the Town Records the improvements which were made, and can thence infer the wants which gave rise to them. The generation which came in with the last century was weary of the seclusion of the primitive town—disowned by its Puritan neighbours, and not caring to cultivate intercourse with them in return. The new townsmen applied themselves to the opening of highways in order to develop their own resources and to avail themselves of the wealth of their neighbours. The

1. Jabez Bowen, (see *Providence Gazette*), died August 18th, A. D. 1770, in the 74th year of his age. "He withheld not a healing hand from the indigent and necessitous, who were frequent partakers of his bounty." His house still stands in Bowen street, in good preservation, a specimen of the best houses in Providence in the earlier part of the last century. It originally stood upon the Town street, with a grass plat in its front, and was removed to its present site long after his death.

early freeholders had looked only to their own convenience as farmers. Their chief regulations of the highways had been with a view to prevent the escape of cattle, rather than to offer any temptations to travellers. Throughout the Dutch period, there had been little intercourse between Boston and New York, and the highway between them, which lay in Rhode Island could only be traversed on horseback. Of the discomforts of the journey, and of the Rhode Island inns, we have a lively description in Madam Knight's "journey to New York in 1704."¹

From some former quotations it may be inferred what were the facilities for travel, even in the "compact part of the Town." The new generation became impatient of this inheritance from their fathers and looked about for improvement. They sought it first in the highways toward other and more prosperous towns. When the settlements reached the "Seven Mile line," after Philip's war, the first purchasers soon ascertained the most direct courses through

1. By the Probate Records of Providence before 1700, vol. I., it appears that horse carts and wheel vehicles, and also pillions were common at that day among the more wealthy, but they were of little service for journeys over the bridle-paths of that time.

the proprietors' woodlands, and made their way with little assistance save that of their own axes. These forest pathways sufficed until they had wagons of their own, and then early in the last century, came applications to the Town Meetings from the rural freeholders that their bridle-paths might be adopted and improved at the public cost. It would be difficult at the present day to identify many of the localities with long Indian names, which it was proposed to connect. The Town street sturdily resisted such impositions, and the country retaliated by opposing everything which was for the benefit of "Providence Town."¹ On the 2d June, 1718, it was "voted and ordered that there shall be three more men added as surveyors, to take care for the repairing of the highways, so that there now is six men ordered for that service." This was to satisfy the country. Such was a sufficient force for the whole of the present county. But the townsmen were desirous of something more than this. Providence and Hartford had been founded during the same year. Eighty-six years later there was no road

1. Town Meeting Records, vol. II., pp. 50—69, 1721.

between them, except by the seaside. During the first decade of the last century, fear of absorption by Connecticut came to an end. As the population flowed over the Seven Mile line, a more friendly intercourse with the next colony seemed desirable. Until that time all the trade had been with New London. This had been, from the first, an active commercial town, and possessed a relative importance which it has long since lost. There dwelt Governor Winthrop, the best friend of Williams, and later, Governor Saltonstall, and other leaders in politics and trade. Thence came needful supplies of corn when the harvest of Providence had failed. On the 17th of August, 1706, the Town meeting gave orders for a highway towards Plainfield. Probably local jealousies interfered, for nothing was done in its construction for a long time, and (Feb. 6, 1709-10,) the Town ordered another highway towards Woodstock. It was to commence with the west end of the bridge.¹ The tide then flowed up to the Town street, and the bridge was much longer, both

1. Arnold's History R. I., vol. II., p. 51, as to the Colony's interference in the matter. These rival schemes seem to have prevented all action.

on the east and west sides of the stream. Both designs remained for a long time unexecuted. The first bridge at Wapwaysett had been but a local improvement, to give access to the meadows of Weybosset. The second had a larger purpose of development and growth, and the way to Plainfield, but carried forward the same design. Yet it was too far in advance of the time. Intercourse with the northern part of Connecticut was infrequent during the last century. In the early part of the present, the Rhode Island roads leading to Connecticut, were, says Dr. Dwight,¹ among the worst and most difficult in the whole country. His contemptuous remark that "the principal street on the western side" of Providence "is part of the great road towards New London and Hartford," probably expressed the feeling of the Connecticut man of his day. It evoked much wrathful comment from the *Providence Gazette* (1810,) but it was nearer to the truth than the Doctor's critics were perhaps aware. There was scarcely any population on the west side of the river when the high-road to Plainfield was undertaken.

1. Dwight's Travels, vol. II., page 29.

The marshy soil and scanty supply of fresh water repelled settlers from Weybossett. A generation passed away before there were many buildings in the locality. Some hopes of a better day were cherished in 1753. A plat bearing that date, on file in the city clerk's office, shows something of the aspect of the whole region, at that time, and what was proposed for its improvement. It contains "*a street laid across the marsh from the street before Jacob Whitman's house to the land belonging to the heirs of Nathan Mathewson,*" that is from Weybossett street to Mathewson street. The plat is endorsed "*Plat of the Highway across Waterman's Marsh.*" The tide had still an entrance to the cove, between the islands of the marsh. Later on, in the last century, it appears from Mr. Samuel Thurber's description of the horrors of a journey over it, that the whole way was worthy of its beginning, and that the road to Connecticut was the one which the people of Providence were least anxious to keep in repair. Thus far, the Plainfield road had been only passable by horsemen, and not by vehicles. The street represented in the plat had an existence only in imagination for about

thirteen years longer. The *Gazette*, of October 19th, 1763, contains a long scheme of a lottery, (after the fashion of those days,) "for rendering passable and commodious, a straight and very fine street, from the Great bridge into the country." The public are assured that "this new way will be easy and convenient for passing to the middle of the town, from all the western parts." "The lottery," says the advertisement, "was granted by the General Assembly, for filling up, and raising the new street in Providence, running directly from the Great Bridge, up to the westward." It was sought to raise the modest sum of £600. But with all their zeal for public improvements, the men of those days of ancient simplicity, paid their subscriptions with a slowness not wholly unexampled in more recent times.¹

In 1763, the new street had no name.² It gained

1. See advertisements in the *Gazette*, November 19, 1763: "All persons indebted to the subscriber for tickets in the Providence Street Lottery, are required to make immediate payment or they may expect trouble from

JAMES OLNEY."

Another advertisement in similar terms is subscribed Daniel Tillinghast.

2. In the advertisements of 1765, it is called only "the new street," April 8, 1765, "the new street on the west side of the Great Bridge."

one a few years later, when the city of Westminster, in England, under the influence of Mr. Fox, had become famous throughout the empire, as the centre of liberal opinions in politics. Its name was borrowed by the land owners of the west side, to express their own political sympathies. This was but a part of a more comprehensive design. In 1769, they had conceived such a dread of anticipated oppression by a tyrannic majority in the Town street, that they projected a new town, to be called Westminster, which should be free from the despotic rule of old Providence. The scheme was defeated by the southern counties, who would suffer no increase of the influence of the North end of the Colony. This was one of the few occasions, when the hostility of Newport proved a signal benefit to Providence.¹ Westminster street was sixty years in the making, yet when the late Mr. Howland first knew it (A. D. 1771) there were but four houses on its southern side, and but one on the northern.

1. Contemporaneous with this agitation was the establishment of a new cemetery on the west side, in 1769. It indicates the rivalry, if not hostility, of the new quarter, as well as its increase. There had been few if any household burying grounds on the West side. Hitherto, when the townsmen of both

After the road to Plainfield was ordered in 1706, public improvements stood still during twenty years. At the end of that time, the people of Warwick and Narragansett, who at first only occupied the shore, were, like those of Providence, now cultivating the inland fields from which the Indians had disappeared. On the 8th of February, 1725, the Town Council of Providence ordered a highway "from Weybossett bridge to the Narragansett country so far as Warwick line." Both of the west side streets had the same beginning at the west end of the bridge. At the outset, the new highway encountered an obstacle whose removal was an undertaking too great for the resources of those days. Weybossett Hill, a perpendicular bluff of considerable size and elevation, stood at the parting of the roads to Warwick and to Plainfield, just beyond the bridge. On the 17th January, 1723-4, "Col. Joseph Whipple, Nicholas Power and Richard Waterman were chosen by the

sections had terminated their controversies with their lives, they had been content to lie down to their last repose in the common resting place at the North end. The increasing west side was now dreaming of a new town of Westminster, of which a new burying ground was to be a conspicuous ornament.

Stone's Memoir of Howland, p. 31.

Town Meeting a committee to agree with Mr. Thomas Staples, upon what terms he may have liberty to dig clay at Waybausett Hill, for to make bricks." The Town were quite willing that he should carry away the entire hill at his own charge. "At a Toun's Quarter Meeting, held at Providence, January ye 27th, Anno Dom. 1723-4," "Upon a petition of Mr. Thomas Staples, for liberty to dig clay at Waybausett Hill, to make bricks. The which is granted, provided he doth not obstruct any highway, nor the free libberty of the passage of people there, and to proceed according to the directions of the committee appointed for the oversite of said work." The hill disappeared long before the memory of any one lately living. In 1723, it was an insuperable obstacle, and the new road to Warwick curved around its base. The curve still remains in the present Weybosset street. Weybosset street, though twenty years later in date than Westminster street, was twenty years sooner built up and occupied. There was then but little intercourse with Connecticut, but very much with Warwick and Naragansett. There, too, was the highway between

Boston and New York. Buildings sprang up—shops and inns—along the line of travel, and the road to Narragansett became the earliest rival of the Town street.

Local improvements kept pace with the commercial spirit now prevailing in the Town. The road to the Upper Ferry was, in 1728,¹ a part of the highway between Boston and New York. On the 18th of November, the Council ordered "a highway northwest from narrow passage," "the Upper Ferry," now "Red Bridge." This is the eastern end of Angell street, and the order only gave a change to the direction of an old thoroughfare. On the 26th January, 1739-40, a road of ample breadth, and we may hope, with better accommodation "for man and horse" was established to the Upper Ferry.² The way from Plainfield road to Pawtuxet was laid out 8 November, 1737.

During a long period, only such vague instruc-

1. March, 1728. The road from Killingly to the "Stated Common," near Providence, was surveyed and returned. So also was the road "from the West side of Wanasquatucket River, Southwardly, to meet with Plainfield road." Town Meeting Records, p. 189.

2. Its "location" has only of late (1872) been changed.

tions as I have quoted were given to the committee who "stated" a new highway. Land was of small value, most of it still belonged to the proprietors, and the private owner could receive only benefit by what was done. With such indefinite boundaries and ample powers, the committees of the Town Meeting, or of the Town Council, could serve their own, as well as the public interest, and sometimes were unable to distinguish accurately between them. That even in early days the virtue of public functionaries was subjected to trials and weaknesses like those of a wealthier generation, may seem probable after reading the following entry: 18th November, 1728, "One or two members of ye councill being suspected and charged by petition, of being interested in ye land adjoining where ye highway was laid, whereupon this Councill desists of any other, or farther proceedings therein." Let us admire the delicacy of the Town Council in withholding the names of their delinquent brethren, and trust that it was not done in hope of a like charity in return.

These were the first signs of growth in the old Town. They indicated that a new spirit had come

in with a new century, that old debates were ended, and that the days of Gregory Dexter and Gorton had gone by. Their successors gave their attention to material interests. They were anxious that Providence should have a market of its own, and should be a competitor with its contemporary towns, instead of being dependent upon them for everything but its ordinary harvest. The generation which saw these earliest improvements, thus slowly executed, saw also many other changes in the aspect of the Plantations. The centre was still by the falls of the Mooshassuc, but every effort of development and expansion was in a southerly and westerly direction. The natural scenery remained, as in the days of Williams and Harris. The cove was deep enough for the early navigation, and it yielded the same supplies which it had afforded eighty years before. Some effort of imagination is required, even by those who recall its huge banks of oyster shells, its slow moving scows, and its sail-boats with their sails flapping in the wind or stranded at low water—to picture the old North end, at a time when the following vote was required or possible: "June 13, 1716, Ordered that

no seine be set or drawn in Providence River, above the Great Bridge"—on penalty of twenty shillings for each offence.¹

In some future papers it may be well to review with greater detail the hindrances to the growth of the Plantations. It will be sufficient to observe at present that the old townsmen gave no cordial welcome to emigrants, and offered them no invitation by the establishment of schools, or other means of improvement. They were satisfied to remain a close corporation. The descendants of the settlers held fast by the "home-lots" of the Town street, with the tenacity which in that age characterized the owners of ancestral property. Few new comers could gain a foothold in the Town. There was need of greater breadth and variety in its materials. The two religious societies which were earliest planted still retained their monopoly, and their members gave, as yet, no sign of the commercial activity which afterwards distinguished them. One of the earlier signs

1. The order yet remains unrevoked. It is honourable to the law-abiding spirit of the people, that no one during the last three generations has been suspected of any intention to violate it.

of an interest in things beyond their own borders was the establishment of a parish of the Church of England (1722), King's Church, afterwards St. John's. Some of its members were among the earliest merchants of the Town. Soon afterwards, even the Puritan doctrines from which the founders had fled, found adherents in the Plantations. Among the supporters of these opposing systems new citizens appear, and become conspicuous in public affairs. A new inducement was offered to a wider variety of immigrants of activity and talent, to aid in the development of the resources so abundant on every hand.

A generation of navigators and traders now grew up around the harbour. Of their first experiments, whether successes or disappointments, we can say little with precision. Custom house records and private papers have disappeared, and the *Gazette* had not yet begun. The first vessels, such as Nathaniel Brown built (1711-1730), were sloops and schooners, the largest of some sixty tons burden. These carried the earliest colonial exports, horses, timber, barrel staves, and hoop-poles, to the West

Indies and the Spanish Main, and the rum of native distillation, to the Bay of Benin. Upon the fisheries, which were the sources of the earliest wealth of Massachusetts, the Plantations did not venture. A generation later, the view grows more distinct and the enterprise and life of the Town street are before us in all their details. During the first half of the last century, we can trace them only in the lengthening rolls of tax-payers, in the ampler Probate inventories, and in the changes which the men of that day wrought in the appearance of the Town after it had come into their hands.¹

These are preserved in the public archives, from which we may learn something of the force and activity of a generation which in its turn has faded from our view.

The coming in of a new age was not without occasional conflicts between old interests and new ones. The Proprietors and their descendants could not

1. With extending foreign intercourse came also the occasional disorders before unknown, which are everywhere incident to a transient maritime class. On the 27th July, 1727, the Town Meeting, doubtless in order to anticipate the wants of an increasing commercial population, ordered the stocks and whipping post to be thoroughly repaired. It would seem that these had not lain idle before the first strangers and foreigners invaded the Town street.

easily divest themselves of the belief that the Town was planted for their sole profit, and that its growth must be in conformity with their own ideas. They had planned the Town street with no provision for access to the water side, and it was long before any remedy was found for their want of forecast. As the "warehouses" increased in depth and approached each other, they again threatened a monopoly of the river side, which the townsmen had foreseen and had endeavoured to defeat by the reservation in 1704. But this (in 1746) had disappeared. Long before that year, the owners of the warehouse lots, and the Proprietors, who still retained many of them, perceived that in their eagerness to get, or to keep, possession they had defeated their own object. So anxious were they to increase the number of their lots, that they had left no highways by which they could be approached. As commercial needs increased, they were forced to reconstruct their plat of the water side, but they did it with the same want of forethought as before.¹ The narrow lanes or alleys on the west side of the Town street were, in their

1. 31 May, 1746, is the date of the new plat.

earliest days, inadequate and inconvenient. Such as they were, the adjoining owners were only too well inclined to claim their exclusive use. They even seem to have believed that in constructing ways to the water side, they were only making private paths, of which they could repossess themselves at their pleasure.¹ The freemen at large had a clearer foresight of the needs of the Town's commerce than had been enjoyed by these early Proprietors. The council chosen by the whole body of the townsmen applied themselves to counteract the ill effects of the narrowness of the proprietors. On the 23d September, 1738, they had appointed a committee, "Col. William Hopkins, Charles Tillinghast and Richard Waterman, to revise the bounds of the highways, from the Town street down to Salt water, and to lay out such highways, as may by ye said *committee be thought proper*, and also to lay out a highway or ways, at ye east end of ye greate bridge, and *other places*, from Providence Tounne Streete, to said greate bridge," etc. There had been frequent collisions between the freeholders and the Proprietors,

1. See vote of the Proprietors, September 4, 1749.

in which, during the first seventy years of the Town, the Proprietors had the advantage. They had made their sales and boundaries, solely with a view to their own convenience, and the townsmen had not been sparing of their censures. The freemen now outnumbered the hundred Proprietors and were no longer inclined to submit to their dictation. They would no longer be content with such narrow lanes and alleys as the Proprietors were willing to allow them, and they seized this opportunity for redress. The new streets of the commercial freemen appear in striking contrast with the gangways of the old agricultural proprietors. These are among the earliest illustrations of the conflict between the old and the new age. It is evident from the report of the committee in 1738,¹ that there was already an

1. Abstract of Report: The committee appointed in 1738, with such extensive powers to "revise" old highways and to make new ones, was composed of William Hopkins, Charles Tillinghast, and Richard Waterman, who were among the chief landholders of their time. The improvements adopted, at their recommendation, were most valuable, and mark a stage in the development of the Town. They were, I., a highway fifty-one feet wide, by Ashton's house to the Salt river. II. Crawford street, a highway thirty-six feet wide, between Mr. Crawford's warehouse and James Mitchell's house. III. They continued Power street to the water side, forty-one feet wide to low water mark. IV. They laid out a highway from the Town street, westward, down to the Salt

appearance of prosperity which suggested the wisdom of more ample provision for the future. To the townsmen of that year, we owe what is left of Market Square. We can only regret that it was too late to preserve more of it.

The Proprietors did not despair of saving something out of the wreck of the outgoing age. They saw that they must make concessions, and they did

water river, where the Great Bridge now standeth, that goeth over the river to Waybausett, "taking in the old town wharfe." "Beginning at the North East Corner of Col. Abbott's still-house, and from thence N. 31 degrees West, adjoining to the Town Street, 123 feet to a white stone stuck in the ground, being also a corner of said Abbott's land, and from thence to extend westward unto the river, holding the breadth of 123 feet, across the river, to the highway on the west end of the bridge." The committee thus saved to this generation the remnant of Market Square. V. The committee laid out a highway from the Town street, westward to the Salt river, "opposite against the homestead land of John Angell, Esq. It being the place where they usually landed when" they "Rode or Carted from the other side the river, fifty feet wide, unto the said Providence River, at lowe water marke." There was long a dock at this place. It is now filled up and is known as Steeple street. VI. A highway thirty-seven feet wide, to the river. On this street the old jail formerly stood. VII. "A highway adjoining to the West side of the Towne Streete, adjoining northerly on the Baptist Meeting house, sixty-six feet wide, and so to extend westerly between the said Meeting house, and the houseing belonging to William Antram, unto the aforesaid Providence river, at Lowe Water Marke."

Few committees of the Town have ever done a more valuable day's work. They seem to have accomplished all this at one assemblage, on the 26th of September, 1738. The record preserves no note of any other meeting. The freeholders made preparation for the commercial age of the Town, now coming on.

it thus : "Sept. 4, 1749, At at a meeting of the Proprietors, Voted that Robert Gibbs, Esq. and Gideon Comstock, be a committee in behalf of the Proprietors to request the Town Council of Providence, that they cause the highways in said Town, and gangways leading from the Main street westward to the Salt River, to be freed from the incumbrances that are thereon, and left open to the use of the public; and that the committee make return of their proceedings, together with what the Town Council shall act therein, that the Proprietors may know what is proper and needful to be open for the use of the public, and that *they may take in the rest, and convert it to their own use.*" They had not forgotten the good old days of the patriarchal association, when their grandfathers had dealt with the entire purchase at their own pleasure, giving and withholding, with little regard to the wishes of any freeholders but themselves. It was now too late to resume what they had granted, and to correct the original errors in their design.

With such inexperience and dissensions the commercial town began. It had no sufficient access to

the water side, and such alleys as there were furnished ample material for controversy. The owners of adjoining estates claimed some of them as private property. Then, and long afterwards, they were the common depositories of the rubbish of the Town street. With increasing trade, deeper warehouses were built, and behind them, wharves of timber, beneath which, the tide ebbed and flowed. No attempt was then made to define the channel of the river, which was the common western boundary of them all.¹

Between the early wharves were long docks or slips reaching nearly to the Town street. These gained in length, as the business of their owners grew larger. Vessels of considerable burden, and capable of West India voyages, lay, remote from the channel, by the very edge of the Town street. As years went on, warehouses of much larger capacity, and built upon solid foundations, encroached upon the harbour. No owner of lands by the water side

1. Some of the original buildings on the west side of the Town street were set, in part, over the water, and the tide flowed nearly up to the foundations of others. The old Baptist Meeting house at Smith street, was built in this way. Stone's life of Howland, p. 29.

was willing to be outdone by his neighbours, and there was no legal restraint upon their competition. During three generations,¹ these wharves and docks bore the names of their early owners. By the end of the last century, those north of Crawford street had been filled up and had become highways. To the southward of it, many are still represented on Daniel Anthony's map, of 1803.

The townsmen long endured the consequences of their ignorance of sanitary science. The ancient wharves were the open sewers of the Town. The tide failed to cleanse them, and the summer sun caused them to exhale "pestilent vapours" at low water. They were, at all times productive of disease, the origin of which was ascribed to every cause but the true one. During many years the visitation was endured, until there came at length, an outbreak so signal as to leave no farther pretext for debate. During the yellow fever of 1797, which was confined to South Main street, in the vicinity of the older wharves, a large number of neighbouring residents were swept away. Among them were James Arnold,

1. See Probate Records, and advertisements in the *Gazette*.

the Town Treasurer, and nearly all his family. The report of deaths from this cause alone, was continued during great part of the summer and autumn. A like, though less extensive, calamity recurred in 1803, and again in 1805. It prompted no action among the slow-moving townsmen of that day. At length, the benevolent destructiveness of the "great gale" (September, 1815,) compelled the rebuilding and reconstruction of the whole water side. The present harbour line was then established.¹ The remaining docks became solid land, and the present "South Water street" obliterated every trace of the ancient shore.

Within these narrow limits was the early commerce of the Plantations. It was wholly on the eastern side of the river, which continued to be, long after the building of the bridge, "the Town side" of Providence.² The improvements of 1738 were the chief additions to the capacity of the Town street. The tenacity with which the owners of the "home-

1. By the Town July and August, and confirmed by the General Assembly October, 1815.

2. See the "Reservation."

lots" resisted change enforced a westward and southward movement. That it had begun appears from the direction of the next important highway. On the 1st of April, 1745, a road was "ordered," "north from the highway that leads from Providence Town, along by Daniel Rutenbridge's (*sic*) Mill, over the Wonasquatucket River to the road, or a landing in some convenient place." We have seen what sort of a "road" this was toward the west from Providence. The last mentioned was little better than a mere by-path for the use of the bordering landowners. The usual discretion was given to the committee in the choice of bounds and *termini*, for the value of land in the neighborhood was still but trifling. Some account of Rutenberg is preserved in the Town Records. He was a German emigrant of some education and capacity. His mill, which was the precursor of great manufacturing establishments, occupying the entire region, had at first but few neighbours, except some small tanneries. He died 15th May, 1754,¹ after a life which added something to the resources of the town. His name was

1. Probate Records, vol. V.

long borne by the neighbourhood in which he was a proprietor. It is a singular illustration of the resistance of the old Plantations to any division of their home-lots, or disturbance of their agricultural pursuits, that more than a century from their beginning, the people were widely scattered over the western side of the "Salt River,"—that there, the improvements were made by strangers, while the Town street was still the only important thoroughfare on the East, and the stronghold of the descendants of the first settlers.

A change, however, was at hand. The next innovation was revolutionary in its effects. It was almost forced upon the reluctant householders who lived under the hill. On the 27th October, 1746, a petition,¹ signed by Robert Gibbs, Stephen Hopkins,

1. Petition for the Opening of Benefit Street: "Whereas the compact part of this Town is of late, much increased, which hath also much increased the Trade and business therein transacted, by which so great a number of carts, chairs, horses and people are necessarily employed that the Street of the said Town is not sufficient for the same to be done in, without great inconveniency, and whereas also, the House lots adjoining to said street, are mostly built on, or are in the hands of such proprietors as do not care to sell them, by means whereof many Gentlemen, tradesmen, and others, whose inclinations would settle them here, greatly to the advantage of the said town, are hindered in

and by some forty others of the more forecasting citizens, was presented to the Council. It asked for a "street or highway" eastward of the Town street, to be laid out "through the town." It was to spare no man's home-lot, and imperilled all the household graves. The petition gives, with a few lively touches, a view of the Town street at that day.

The first proposal had been in 1743, but the resistance could not then be overcome. Among the chief promoters of the scheme were the members of the Congregational Society who resided at the North end. These, when they had finished what seemed to the men of that day, a very imposing edifice, (the old Town house of later times,) found that they had no access to it, but by going down the Town

their said designs by reason that there is not houses to be hired, or lotts to be bought to build houses on. To remedy all which, we pray that there may be another street or highway laid out through said Town, to begin at the lane called Power's lane, and to extend northward, a convenient distance eastward from the present street, in the most suitable place, until it comes northward as the great gate of Capt. John Whipple, and that your honours appoint a suitable committee.

"27th October, 1746.

Signed,

ROBERT GIBBS,
DANIEL JENCKES,
STEP. HOPKINS, and
Many others."

street to Hanover (now College) street, and there re-ascending the hill. The new structure was almost unapproachable in icy weather. The chief merchants of the day complained of the insufficiency of the Town street, and the want of space for the increasing population. The Town street was then, and long afterwards, the public market-place, and the clumsy vehicles of those days could, with difficulty, be forced through its quagmires. On the second Monday in February, 1747,¹ the first order was made for a new street, to be called "Back street," or "Benefit street." The order of the Council was in these words: "15th February, 1747, Whereas there has been a petition for some time lain before the Council for the laying out of a highway or back street, at some convenient distance eastward from the *present street*, from the lane called Power's lane, so far northward as the grate gate of Capt. John Whipple, in order thereto we do order and appoint Jeremiah Field, Esq., Capt. Samuel Biles, and Christopher Harris a committee to inspect it and to examine the place and land, whether it is convenient to lay

1. Page 50, Town Council Records.

out said street or way, or not, and to make report to the council in some convenient time.”¹ The *termini* first adopted were Power’s lane and Short alley. The extensions at either end were afterthoughts. (1758). “The grate gate of Capt. John Whipple” opened northwardly from his property, into the Town street, at the head of Constitution Hill.

This was the most radical change proposed during the last century. It involved an abandonment of the original plan and purpose of the agricultural Plantations, and an entire reconstruction of the east side of the Town. It broke through all the primitive home-lots, and foreshadowed the removal of the household graves. The descendants of the settlers took the alarm. The Fenners, whose estate looked out upon Market Square, threatened violent resistance, if the street were carried across their fields. The remembrance of scenes in the early town meetings of the last century, gave some importance to the menace. Others made more quiet resistance, by interposing every possible delay. The Town judged wisely that it was better not to hasten unwelcome

1. See also pp. 53—59, Council Records.

changes, but to allow hostility quietly to subside. At length, one by one, the opposers yielded and a compromise was made. The committee were instructed to refrain from disturbing any burial place or building,—“avoiding all the buildings and graves possible.” Compensation was given, but it was small. One of the land owners, Dr. Jabez Bowen, the chief surgeon of his day, declined to receive any, declaring that his gain was greater than his loss. Perhaps our esteem for his magnanimity may suffer some abatement when we remember that he was an active politician, was often a candidate for the Assembly, and was only offered his indemnity in the current Colonial bills. Thus, the old town yielded to the new. The farmers and yeomen who had been the chief inhabitants of the “compact part of the Town” gave place to owners of vessels and wharves. The “home-lots” or Plantations of Providence now became “house lots” in deeds and wills. Space was found for a numerous population, near what was to be the new centre of trade, the bridge and square. But so many were the interests affected, that work went slowly on. As a specimen of the tenacious

conservatism of the old town, this may suffice. Benefit street was "ordered" in 1747. It could not be completed against the efforts of the hostile minority until 1751, compensation was voted to some of them 2d September, 1755. The plat, according to which the street was finally established, was ordered 31 January, 1756. So late as February, 1761, £300 currency were awarded to Benjamin Belknap, for damages done him by the new street. It was extended northward to the Town street, 10 June, 1758. But to pacify all objectors, and to insure the quiet of the neighbourhood, the gate at the north end was ordered to be retained.¹ The committee reported their work complete on the 19th July, 1758. The street was straightened and widened in subsequent years,² as the old graveyards were one by one removed. The curves and angles yet remaining are memorials (in some places) of the respect once shown to the sacredness of the family burial place.

1. It lasted many years, and was among the early recollections of the late Mr. Dexter Thurber.

2. The work was prosecuted slowly in those days of economy and thrift. See August, 1785, p. 323, Records. See Town Meeting Records, vol. VII., p. 42, etc., July and August, 1783. Records, 1792, April 15, 1801.

After all this controversy, the work seems to have been too early or too late. It was too late to stay the growth of the West end, and too early for the wants of the old Town. During twenty-five years few houses, and those chiefly at the northern and southern extremities, were built upon the new street. The Town was now crossing the river, and its growth was chiefly on its western and southwestern borders. Not until after the Revolution was there a strong tendency towards the new Benefit street. The men of the last century were not fond of the steep hillside. Its descent was uncomfortable and even perilous in an icy winter, while as yet there were neither street sweepers nor side walks. The burial grounds at short intervals, added little to the cheerfulness of the view. As in London and in our colonial towns, men lived over their shops in the great thoroughfares, until commerce had become so extensive that merchants required separate houses for their dwellings.

Similar, though less protracted controversies arose over most of the early highways. Nearly every one of them was the subject of a dispute which needs

only to be mentioned, as a struggle of the old times against the new, with the result usual in such encounters.

At the middle of the last century, population and business were still the largest at the old North end. There, among the earliest mechanics, were some of the older shipyards, and most of the older traders. During the years of Lieut. Gov. Elisha Brown he was the successor of the ancient miller, in the ownership and rule of the Town Mill. In his day—the long day of “Ward and Hopkins,” the Mill was the political centre of the Plantations, and lost none of its old celebrity as the place of partizan assemblage and debate.

But the growth of the Town, since its rebuilding at the close of Philip’s war, had been in a southerly and westerly direction. The movement was slow, for the Plantations increased but slowly, and in those days men clung to old homesteads, with a tenacity now unknown. The building of Weybossett bridge indicated the place for a new centre, long before the population gathered around it. There was but little haste in building at the South end. It was too far

from the Mill, the shops, and places of assemblage of every kind. We have little to mark the change which was going forward around the yet unnamed square. The old places of trade by the Mill and at the North end, still kept their former prestige. In June, 1729, the Colony voted to establish a County House in each of the three counties¹ The townsmen voted to assist in its erection, if they could have the choice of its site, and the use of it for their Town meetings. The Assembly left the selection (February, 1730,) to the freemen of Providence. The "up town" and "down town" parties were divided in their choice, between land of James Olney, in Olney's lane, a little to the east of the Town street, and the Page lot, in Meeting street, where is now the City school. The establishment of the Court house so far to the southward, was a victory of the progressive men of that day. The Town gave its directions as to the building. It was called the "Colony House," and was the first public building except the jail. It was not completed until October, 1731, the April Town Meeting having been

1. Newport, Providence and King's.

held in the Quaker Meeting-House. It lasted until December 24, 1758, when it, and the old "Providence Library," which it sheltered, perished by fire. It superseded, but only after some years, the inns of the "North End," as the place of legislative and judicial business. The present State House in the near vicinity, was built within a few years after the fire, by the aid of lotteries and paper money. It remains, after the lapse of more than a century, as a proof that in 1762 the "North end" and the Town street had lost little of their original importance.¹

1. These are the humble dimensions of our first Municipal edifice. Records, vol. IV., p. 22, January, 1729, Town's Quarter Day: "It was ordered that the County Court House shall be of wood, forty feet by thirty, and eighteen foot stud, between joints, and it is farther ordered that there shall be a chimney or two, built in said house from the chamber floor and upwards." Its cost was £664 9s. currency. The new Court house had cost in 1762, £51,556 0s. 11d. old tenor. So entirely was the east side in possession of the business of the Town that the Assembly turned the fact to account for the benefit of the Colony, which had been sorely burdened by its architectural efforts. With the frugality of that day, (*Gazette*, April 6-13, 1765,) the Sheriff, William Wheaton, by order of the legislature, advertised the cellars of the Colony House, to be let for stores. After the building of the new Court House in 1763, the Town Meetings were generally held in the hall, which, until recent years occupied the entire lower story. This continued until the purchase of the "Old Town House," in 1795. On an occasion of unusual excitement, (20th June, 1787,) the Town Meeting adjourned to "the Baptist house." The great lower hall of the new Colony House was, during many years, the chief place of exhibi-

Another indication that the Town was forsaking its old centre near the Mill, was the establishment of the "hayward," (*i. e.*, the Market and scales,) by the east end of the dock, where the Market house now stands. In 1758, it had been long fixed there, doubtless for the convenience of farmers, from the western towns. On the west side there was little building or business, except on Weybossett street, the old road to Narragansett, until after the Revolution. Except Weybossett hill, much of the land

tions and assemblages of every kind, which could not find shelter in the meeting-houses of that day. There were given the first dramatic performances, and the earliest scientific lectures. On the 1st of March, 1764, Mr. Johnson advertised the delivery of a series of lectures on Electricity, with experiments. Among his topics was "The endeavouring to guard against lightning in the manner proposed shown not to be chargeable with presumption, nor inconsistent with any of the principles of natural or Revealed Religion."

With the changes of the times, the hall served for martial exercises. (June 21, 1777, *Gazette*), "Thomas Claggett, late of Newport gives notice that he intends opening a school to teach the use of the back sword, at the State House in Providence. The terms may be known by applying to said Claggett, at his shop, the corner of the parade opposite the Brick Market." During the following years the great room saw dinners and public balls on days of public rejoicing, at which, it may be hoped, the patriotic fervour of the company made them forgetful of the defects of the cooking apparatus. The hall lasted until the present generation, when it was divided into public offices for the Assembly and the Courts.

See Staples's Annals, pp. 191-3.

was still marsh, covered by every spring tide. Where is now Dorrance street, was then an open channel communicating with the cove. In 1732, Gov. Hopkins had counted the houses on both sides of the bridge. There were seventy-four on the east, and only twelve on the west, all the rest were farm houses. In 1768, (Jan. 1,) the houses on the west side of the river were 102, and the population 911.¹ Most of these were in Weybossett street. The increase of the west side began with the leveling of the hill, and the creation of a *terra firma* with its materials.

As the century went on there were numerous indications of prosperity. The early advertisements of the *Gazette* indicate the scantiness of the population of the west side, by the vagueness of the directions needed in order to find any one in that locality. October 22, 1763, "Daniel Jackson, brass founder from Boston informs the public that he hath set up his business in Providence, on the west side of the Great Bridge near Captain George Jackson's, where he does all sorts of work in the founders'

1. Arnold's History, vol. II., p. 301.

trade, after the newest fashions, and in the most curious and elegant taste." Most of the few west side advertisers thought it needless to be more specific as to their places of business.

The Proprietors' deeds of lots near the Mill, were especially numerous in 1737. In 1746, the "warehouse lots" were occupied so far south as Crawford street and the "Reservation" had disappeared. Below "Crawford's wharf" the buildings stood with many and wide intervals between them. But the Plantations had attained a prosperity equal to that of most colonial towns. They had no rivalry with Boston or New York, nor had they, as yet, the maritime enterprise of Newport. But the steps by which they had ascended were well taken, and not to be retraced. They have not been described in contemporary diaries or letters. They may be followed in the wills and inventories at the Probate office. From these alone we may learn something of the private life of the men who once trod these well-worn highways. They could have felt little of the sensitiveness with which the present generation shrinks from the publication of minute details of

household arrangements and supplies. Everything pertaining to the estate of a departed townsman was spread upon the public records, and contributed to the topics of the day. Little farther information can be desired, as to the early lack of creature comforts, and the gradual progress towards their attainment.

Having viewed the houses which overlooked the Town street during the years of the Indian war, we may from the same records obtain the material for a survey of the dwellings which the first commercial generations built upon their old highway, and of the beginnings of wealth within.

Before the Indian war, everything had been stagnant and stationary. A dark cloud hung over the future, and there was neither enterprise nor wealth, nor immigration. The houses of a story and a half, and the furniture, equally rude and solid, were fashioned by the same hands. The same artificers constructed houses, boats, and tables, and, when these were needed no longer,—the coffins in which they bore their neighbours to their last resting places in the family orchards. Besides their homesteads they

left little beside farming tools and cattle. There was at best, only comfort, and scarcely that, according to the standard of the next generation. But as the maritime period of the town went on, the earliest profits found employment in the erection of more spacious abodes. The townsmen who were in comfortable circumstances, built no more of the primitive dwellings of a story and a half. There had been a very few houses of two stories, at the beginning of the last century. By the year 1720, they were quite common, and the earliest of those now remaining are of that time. This second class of houses in the Town street, had an upper story surmounted by broad and heavy projecting eaves, very often the gables were turned towards the street. Some are yet standing. The houses of Dr. Vandelight, in South Main street, and of Dr. Jabez Bowen, in Bowen street, bear witness to the solid construction of those days. Many others of the same class have but recently disappeared. Such were the old "Arnold house," opposite the foot of Waterman street, which bore in iron figures upon its chimney, the date of 1726. The wooden block opposite St.

John's churchyard, was of 1720. The old "Town House," (1723,) was the most conspicuous building of that day, a faithful representation of it is, fortunately, preserved.¹ A few years later, (1740-1750,) still larger houses of the same style, with the whole gable projecting a foot or more beyond the wall, were the residences of the more prosperous townsmen. These buildings were all upon the Town street. Their style and fashion had gone by before the "West side" began to be built up. Of this class were the old Fenner and Abbott houses, which looked down upon Market square. The last is within the memory of most of us. From its balcony, King George II. was proclaimed, and the Declaration of Independence read. The Fenner house, next to the northward of it, was of smaller size, but of similar design. The house owned by the late Moses Brown—the oldest part of which was built by William Crawford, (died 1720,) and the newer, by John Meritt, (about twenty years later,) was the best specimen of a dwelling of that period. A well preserved example of the less costly houses

1. The property of Mr. H. C. Whitaker.

is that of Governor Stephen Hopkins, in "Bank lane," which originally stood at its foot, but now, since 1808, half way between South Main and Benefit streets. Although so many of these old structures have disappeared, enough of them yet remain, to enable us to reconstruct the Town street of the early shipowners and merchants of the Plantations.

The increase in the number and value of their household goods kept pace with the improvement in their habitations. Many of the most prominent settlers, like Williams, had not been bred to "the plough or the oar," but they became sufficiently practised in the use of different implements, to do their own mechanical work. Thomas Olney, the successor of Williams, in his religious society, had only a bible, and two or three controversial works. He had a workshop with tools, among which was a smith's vise. William Harris, one of the chief landholders of his day, had many more books but no luxuries, and only "puter" vessels. There was among his effects no article of silver. The fugitives from the burning of the town had carried away much of its early wealth. The cattle which were left behind and

which were tortured and killed by the Indians, were in a few years replaced. But the Plantations had received a check. There was no money, and no ability to set up more comfortable household establishments, until the early years of the last century.

So exact and minute were the probate inventories that the things not mentioned in them are worthy of remark. Almost every manufactured article came from over the sea—could not be readily replaced—and had a value such as has been long unknown. The lists are so thorough and complete as to include all articles of feminine attire, as also a pound or two of tallow candles, an iron buckle, a handful of nails, or an old iron candlestick. Nathaniel Mowry, (died March 24, 1717,) left "a stone jugg, with some rum in it," which the testator was not spared to enjoy. During many years, they whose frugality or whose narrow means, or contempt for the vanities of the world, refused the imported silver buckles, made fast their habiliments with "kneestrap." Pairs of these leathern kneestrap are duly inventoried and appraised among their assets. Nothing is wanting to

a view of parlour, kitchen, and bed chamber, in an interior of those days.¹

From the last decades of the seventeenth century, there is a perceptible increase in the amount and variety of personal estates. As houses grew larger, the furniture was more abundant and of better quality. Years before, there had been many slaves—both negroes and Indians—in Newport and Narragansett, but only in the early years of the last century, did the household establishments of the Plantations become equal to the burden. They now indicate a greater ease of living, among the more prosperous townsmen. Some luxuries, before unknown, begin to appear among their household

1. During the seventeenth century but one razor appears in the Probate inventories. Stephen Harding, (died 31 May, 1680,) had the first which came under the jurisdiction of the Court of Probate. The fashion of wearing the beard was well-nigh universal, and was discontinued in New England soon after it ceased in London. Leverett, Deputy Governor, 1671-72, Governor 1673-78, is the first Governor of Massachusetts who is painted without a beard. It was common to men of all religious opinions, which they distinguished by its more or less "formal cut." This fact has not been duly remembered in latter days. There was, we may be certain, no razor among Williams's household effects. He would have regarded the time wasted in shaving, as a fearful item in his final account. Yet he has been represented in the portrait statue which the State has erected in his honour, in a guise which he would have thought appropriate only to a "priest all shaven and shorn." Razors did not come into common use in the Plantations, until the end of the seventeenth century.

effects. Every article of silver, however inconsiderable, receives honourable mention. Thus, James Rogers had, it appears by his inventory of 13 April, 1719, silver shoe buckles, and "one pair of silver clasps to his pocketbook." Many had one or more silver spoons, and buckles. Here and there a silver cup was among the family treasures.

One of the earliest examples of commercial success, was that of Gideon Crawford, who lived in Providence from 1685, until his death in 1707. He sent some of the first vessels from this port to the West Indies, and left what was for those days, an ample estate, including what was then the large amount of £15 in plate. His widow, Mrs. Freelove Crawford, (daughter of Arthur Fenner,) continued his mercantile adventures several years after his death. She appears to have displayed much energy of character and largely augmented the family estate. Her real and personal wealth is duly chronicled in the Probate Records, vol. I. Among her adornments "and other effects," are enumerated "63 Bookes," a fur muff with case, a scarlet cloak, a gold-headed cane, high-heeled shoes, an arm chair, fourteen

chairs, six of them covered with leather, four pictures, side saddle, silver tankard and salt cellars, 2 silver porringers and seven spoons, 2 brass fire doggs, one wine cupp of silver, and 1 rum cupp, Gold £12, besides several sloops and schooners. A decided advance from the days of her grandfather, William Harris. She died 1712. Her son, William Crawford, was also a successful merchant, besides holding several offices of the town and colony. His inventory, (Aug. 9, 1720,) was the largest which had yet been exhibited to the Court of Probate. It amounted to £3,551 19s. 1d.

Pardon Tillinghast,¹ the successor of Thomas Olney, left a good estate for his day. He had no workshop, a few more books, and one silver spoon.

A few years later, larger schooners and sloops, and shares or parts of them, had become frequent investments. Among the proceeds of their voyages were occasional logs of mahogany, which were wrought into massive furniture, now highly prized among family relics—and pieces of Spanish silk and linen, as presents for wives and sweethearts. The

1. Tillinghast died 19 January, 1717.

numerous wills of townsmen dying in the West Indies and on the Spanish Main, sufficiently indicate the direction of the new spirit of enterprise. Legacies—too often of old tenor bills—but sometimes of Dutch guilders, and good Spanish dollars, afforded consolation to the mourners. Increasing wealth brought with it increase of comforts. In 1716–20, many of the citizens had several “bookes” beside their family Bibles. English periwigs ornamented the Town street, gold and silver-headed canes and gold and silver buckles were no longer marks of distinction. Foreign trade brought in some amount of Spanish and Dutch gold and silver coin. Table linen was spread upon the boards at which the ancient yeomen had been content without it. Looking glasses now first ministered to the gratification of their households.¹ The huge chimneys, well heaped with logs of oak and chestnut, were now ornamented with andirons and fire-dogs of brass or iron. More liberal supply of chairs superseded the discomfort of the ancient settles. Furniture for table and

1. Some of these could have been of no great size, being valued only at four shillings.

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1. Some of these could have been of no great size, being valued only at two shillings.

kitchen showed a like improvement in creature comforts, by the more general diffusion of ladles, chocolate pots, skewers, dripping pans, skimmers, sieves and every variety of pots and pans, spoons, salt cellars, pepper boxes, and nutmeg graters. The appraisers noted with severe accuracy skillets, spiders, gridirons and stewpans. But the most striking evidence of progress is afforded by the increasing number and variety of tools for mechanical operations which had been unknown here in the days of Williams and Harris. There were now plasterers, stone-cutters, masons and joiners, ship and housewrights. As the century went on, household manufactures became more frequent, and conversant with new materials. Hand-looms, (variously written by executors to whom the art was new,) "loombs" or "lumbs," were not infrequent in 1740. William Field,¹ left among his assets, one pair of cards and five pounds of raw cotton. The number of candle-moulds, (now a common household utensil,) proves that the day of the old "pitch lights" had gone by.

By the middle of the last century comfort had

1. Died 1742.

made still farther advances. Warming pans and some other implements which, fifty years before, had belonged only to the few, could now be found in all well-provided households. Tinware, unknown to the earlier generations, was now common even in the country parts of the Plantations. Plates, drinking cups, and other utensils of "puter," were in common use among the less wealthy householders, until late in the last century. They did not break, and were more cleanly than the old wooden trenchers. But pewter became, in its turn, more expensive, and was superseded by earthenware, and it, in its turn, by glass.

Clocks were quite common, but silver watches were not frequent enough to displace sun-dials, until half of the century had gone by. Both parlour and kitchen furniture improved in variety and amount. In the fourth decade of the last century, chocolate and coffee mills, tea-pots and canisters, chafing dishes, skimmers, ladles, sieves, chopping-knives and skewers, *lignum vitæ* mortars and pestles, cheese toasters, and pudding dishes, gave evidence of better provision for festival days, than could be made

in the time described by Chad Brown. The dining room partook in the improvement. On many floors were carpets of domestic manufacture. On the walls were looking glasses, and sometimes maps and engravings. Chairs were now universal, even on the west of the "seven mile line." Soup plates, decanters and wine glasses¹ were upon the tables of the more wealthy, at the middle period of the century. Bird cages, valued at four shillings, and flower pots, with occasional instruments of music, as flutes, were indications of improvement in taste. Plate may have been accounted an investment amid the fluctuations and uncertainties of the paper currency, for the early ship-owners and merchants had no lack of silver tankards, cups, porringers and spoons.²

1. The first wine glasses in the Town belonged to John Crawford, (died 17 March, 1718-19,) and to Gabriel Bernon, (died 1735-36, 1st February). John Crawford had divers "spoones," porringers, "cuppes," pepper boxes and graters of silver, valued at 30 pounds, and many luxuries for that day. He owned several vessels, and merchandize valued at £1,614 2s. 11d. besides real property.

2. In the days of colonial bills, when all sorts of foreign coins were occasionally offered and there were no bankers or other experts to certify their value, small "money scales and weights" were common articles of shop and household furniture, (1730-1765). In one of the earliest numbers of the *Providence Gazette* "small scales and weights" are advertised for sale by the Publishers, at the printing office, among other articles in their lists of "stationery," November, 1763.

With this provision for comfort, to be enjoyed within, there was some regard to ornaments for display in the Town street. A testator in 1742, left, with better things, "a gold ring, with five sparks," which the prudent executor notes, "are supposed to be diamonds,"¹ and values at £20. The more substantial citizens had gold-headed canes, and, some of them, "carnelian seals set in gold." By this time gold buttons and silver watches were not infrequent. In 1745, Providence had, through the Blackstone valley, much of the trade of central Massachusetts, had the same tropical luxuries as at the present day, and could indulge in some London finery. The shop of Arnold Coddington,² in the Town street, was amply supplied with broadcloths, "scarlet, 'blew,' and dove colour and green," callimanco and shalloons, camlet, fustians, crape and buckram, also stockings of cotton and cambric, silk gloves, handkerchiefs, and stockings, with clocks, linen and silk damask. His feminine customers were tempted by the display of ribands of gorgeous colours, gold and silver,

1. Vol. IV., Probate Records, p. 52, inventory of W. Walker, 14 Oct., 1742.

2. He died 12 October, 1742.

white and crimson, green and silver. "Girls' fans," of black gauze, and many obsolete adornments, whose very names are unintelligible to the shopkeepers of this generation, lent enchantment to the view. Husbands and fathers were not neglected, for them Coddington had buckles of gold and silver for shoes and small clothes, as well as girdle buckles, mourning buckles, and buckles for all the other emergencies of human life. We are left to conjecture the exclamations of the thrifty Proprietors and freeholders of those days, in their interviews with the purchasers of these vanities, in the privacy of their own homes. To give sufficient variety to his merchandize—that none might go away disappointed—Coddington offered also razors, tooth brushes and mouse traps, "sliding perspective glasses," hardware, tools and nails. This inventory, the longest which had as yet appeared, fills eleven closely written folio pages. Its total valuation is £3,640 Os. 3¼d. It offers a strange contrast to the lists of household goods of fifty years gone by. Whoso peruses it will gain much valuable learning, as to the feminine adornments of that day. Arnold Coddington was

of the family of Governor Coddington, of Newport. Such a departure from his ways, by his posterity, might almost have disquieted the slumbers of their Quaker ancestor. The unhappy dealer in luxuries was somewhat in advance of his time, for he appears to have died insolvent.

In the value of his goods, Coddington was only rivalled by William Turpin.¹ He dealt in more substantial wares, as saddles, etc. His property in his shop alone, was valued at £3,255 18s. 8d.²

Nicholas Power, died in Surinam, 27 February, 1743, leaving a similar variety of effects, which were valued at £1,042 09s. 6d. James Olney, died 6 October, 1744. His inn furniture and other assets amounted to £987 15s. Those of Stephen Dexter, were of the amount of £638, of William Watson £2,498, of John Savery, (died 4 January, 1752,) £1,911 12s. Among this merchandize might be found looking glasses, (some of £30 cost,) Spanish silk stockings, with clocks, Spanish and Scotch

1. Died March, 1743.

2. William Turpin sold no luxuries, but the inventory of his shop or warehouse shows iron, brass and wooden ware, tools, nails, paper, cloth, linen and woollen goods, "puter," groceries, and produce, 6 folio pages.

linens, and many other things of like value and necessity. At this time, (1740–1750,) Dutch and Spanish gold coins were no infrequent spectacle in the Town street, as the trade with Surinam increased, and doubtless excited the envy of those who hoped to find in their dealings in paper money a substitute for honourable commerce.

Many persons in the middle part of the century, left from one to two thousand pounds in personal property, besides their real estates. Inventories of from £3,000 to £5,000 were not infrequent. The embarrassments of business by colonial legislation are indicated by Moses Brown in his inventory of the property of his Uncle Obadiah, 26 October, 1762. His goods, enumerated, article by article, are valued at £93,220 16s. 1½*d.* old tenor, equal to £3,995 3s. 6½*d.* in "lawful money."

By this middle period of the last century the descendants of the settlers, had all the chief culinary utensils and materials known to the present day. The ancient iron pot alone furnished forth the tables, on the feast days, few and far between—of the years of Williams and Harris. It doubtless served many

purposes, of baking, stewing and boiling, but any addition of sauce or flavour, seems to have been then unknown.

The people who had enjoyed this first experience of magnificent attire, were in no mood to sit down to entertainment like this. Could we reconstruct the kitchen of that day, we should find little wanting of fish or fowl, or of the culinary apparatus or material of the present time. The skill of housewives, become learned in every variety of preserve and pastry, meats and fowls, was now supplemented by the aid of negroes, enslaved or free. These, in a time when economy of material was of less account than at present, found ample scope for their peculiar faculties in the plenty of the old Rhode Island kitchens.

With the increase of the town, many emancipated slaves became partakers of the general prosperity, and left behind them effects sufficient to attract the attention of the Town Council. Thus, among a large number,¹ "Jack Harris, a negro man, so called," (died 21 December, 1745,) left £145 11s. 5d. much of it, unhappily, in colonial bills. John Read,

1. Vol. IV. p. 189, Probate Records.

"free negro," (died 21 December, 1753,) left £100, and so did many others. Some had received their freedom, and bequests from dying masters, which remain on record as evidence that they possessed rights which white men "felt bound to respect."¹

The most conspicuous among them during the last century, was Emanuel, commonly called Manna, Bernoon, an emancipated slave of Gabriel Bernon. Turning to account the hereditary talent of his race, he established here the first oyster house of which there is any record. It was in the Town street, near the site of the old Custom House of a later day. To satisfy the cravings of a thirsty generation, he provided twenty-three drinking glasses, four "juggs," twenty-eight glass bottles, two bowls, with pewter plates, spoons and cooking apparatus in proportion. The knowledge which he had acquired during his former service, ensured his prosperity. He was the first of a long line of such ministers to the public wants. Dying in 1769, he left a house and lot in Stampers street, (where his wife carried

1. See Probate Records, vol. VI., Moses Brown emancipated six or seven. See Eve Bernon's will, vol. VI.

on the trade of washing,) and personal estate valued at £539 10s. His gravestone in the North Burying ground is as substantial a memorial as those of most of the wealthier white men of his day.

To guard against the ill effects of the abundant feasting and drinking of that generation, three physicians of ability and note, Drs. Jabez Bowen, Robert Gibbs, (died June 29, 1769,) and David Vandelight, prescribed, from a formidable list of drugs. Some of their medicaments, (as the Bezoar stone,) have happily disappeared from the pharmacopœias of modern days.¹

Dr. Gibbs² was of Boston, a man of education, and rendered useful service by his activity in public

1. People had not yet lost faith in its magical properties. It was the "mad-stone" of former days. *Phillips's New World of Words*. Bezoar or Beazoar, "a stone bred in a certain beast called Bazar, which, by feeding upon wholesome herbs, growing in the Indies is very cordial, and conduceth in all venenate and contagious diseases." *Phillips's New World of Words*, 6th ed., 1706, "a precious stone of great virtue against poison and the plague, bred in the stomach of a creature like a wild goat." *Bailey's Dictionary*, 1736, "a stone of excellent virtue in medicine, of the bigness of an acorn, found in the stomach or belly of sundry animals." Its virtues have not saved it from utter neglect. Let us hope that it, or at least their faith in it, was of some service to patients suffering in spirit from the plague of colonial paper money.

2. The list of his drugs is valued at £1,470 12s. His house, lately owned by Mr. E. W. Howard, was one of the best in the Town street.

affairs. Dr. Vandelight was a graduate of Leyden, and was bred to his profession in the most celebrated school in Holland. He was a brother-in-law of Nicholas, John and Moses Brown, and seems to have been attracted to Providence by mercantile inducements. He was skilled in the chemistry of his day, and introduced here the Dutch method of separating spermaceti from its oil, which brought much wealth to the Plantations. He gave the first practical instruction in anatomy which was imparted in the Plantations. The duties of the apothecary and of the physician were then, and long afterwards, united in the same hands. With his commercial employments they ensured him a fortune ample for his day. After his decease, (14 February, 1755,) Vandelight's inventory of drugs and instruments alone fills five folio pages. Their value was £4,375 14s. 4d. Like his medical brethren, he lived in one of the best houses of his day. It yet stands in the Town street, (between College and Hopkins streets,) a well preserved relic of the last century. It has the heavy projecting gables of that time, and in size and solidity of construction, it had few superiors in the Town.

A review of this period, however rapid, would be incomplete without some notice of the ancient inns of the Plantations. From their early days they had been the scenes as well as the subjects of many political controversies. They were not, for a century, superseded by any legislative or municipal edifices, and were the chief places of resort in times of public excitement, or of social converse and relaxation.

From the earliest times, the tendency to strong drink bade defiance to the ingenuity of the Town Meeting. The evil of an indulgence in "strong waters" is no discovery of recent times. The contemporaries of Williams were well furnished with biblical texts, and their experience was not unlike our own. They had even more reason for alarm, for beside the evil examples of white men, the "Indian drunkenness" endangered the whole community.¹

Every expedient known to our day was fully tried during the first century of the Town. It was quite as difficult as at present to restrain this unalterable tendency of human nature. The Plantations were

1. This will be more fully treated in another paper.

content at last with providing inns for travellers and townsmen, and landlords whose characters gave some guaranty for the quietness of their houses, and the goodness of their liquor.

As the Assembly, the Courts, Town Meeting and Council always sat in taverns which were upon the chief highway, the landlord was at the centre of intelligence, and often became the oracle of his neighbourhood. He was sometimes chief of the local militia, and representative in the assembly, and enjoyed the prominence which in Massachusetts belonged to the Puritan minister. As the Assembly had among its members many of his brethren of the same vocation, he was well assured of their sympathy in his claims and charges. He knew, also, that they were perfectly competent to deal with all questions of bad liquor, and short measures without previous reference to a select committee. He had every reason to be careful that there should be no failure of creature comforts at these solemn political assemblages.

The inn was not one of the primitive institutions of the Town. As we have observed, there was,

during many years, no intercourse between Boston and New York. Long after the Dutch period, travellers were so few that it was scarcely worth while to enquire whether they were pleased with their entertainment. During two generations, all strangers coming to Providence, were received in private houses,—the more important, or those entrusted with public business—by Williams himself, or by Thomas Olney, the Town Clerk. After inns were duly licensed, (in 1655,) the reception of wayfarers was scarcely their chief employment.¹ The inn was a centre of political intelligence, the drinking house and club room of the neighborhood, as well as the place of public business.² Some of the earlier land-

1. "1654, September ye first. * * It is ordered that each Toun doe forth-with apoynt or license one or two houses for ye entertainment of strangers and to encourage such as shall undertake to keepe such houses. And that all others that are not licensed do not retaille either wine, beere or strong liquors, upon ye penalty of five poundes. And ye former lawes for ale ho'ises and liquers be repealed." On the 25th of May, 1655, Roger Mowry and Richard Pray were appointed to keep said houses in the Town of Providence. But as there is no notice of their acceptance, or of their appearing to give the required security, it is doubtful if they assumed the office at that time.

2. Throughout the English colonies the inn or tavern was called the "ordinary." "Taverns or ordinaries," in John Clarke's "Ill News from New England." On September 26, 1709, the Town Meeting elected representatives to the "Gen-

lords, (as Whipple and Abbott,) attained influence and office, and aided in building up the fortunes of the Town. Three of these—the most conspicuous in the last century, were John Whipple, William Turpin and Epenetus Olney, all of whom gained frequent and conspicuous mention in the early records.

The celebrity of these old hostels outlived their political importance. The oldest was that of John Whipple. It stood about half way up Constitution Hill. It never attained the size of either of the others, its rivals. On the second of March, 1680, the Town Council, reciting that the General Assembly had given power to the Town Councils "to regulate the disorderly selling of strong drink without license, and to suppress whom they see cause, and to grant licenses," proceeded to grant some of the first innholders' licenses ever given by the Town, to John Whipple and to Mary Pray, "to keep public houses of entertainment for strangers and providing both

eral Assembly to be holden at the house of William Gardiner, ordinary keeper in South Kingston." The Marquis Chastellux remarked the same use of the word in Virginia, in 1780. The word is still in use in rural England.

for horse and man." "The said Whipple and Pray promiseth that they would do according to ye best of their skill and abilities."¹ From the staid and sober character of the old Whipple inn, as well as from its central position, it became the favourite place of meeting of the Town Council and Court of Probate. During more than two generations it was the scene of strifes and lamentations over unsatisfactory wills and inventories, and listened to more than one family controversy between disappointed expectants of paternal estates. "The Worshipful Council" here dispensed a rude and summary justice to vagrants, and "non-freeholders," and admonished indiscreet boys. With these, however, their dealings seem never to have been severe, if their fathers were the fortunate owners of real property. Whipple's inn did not outlast the middle of the last century. Joseph Whipple, the son of its founder, was a prominent merchant and the Lieutenant Governor of the Colony.

1. The house of Mary Pray stood on the site of the old City Tavern, part of the "Dexter donation." The property, in the hands of various owners, was dedicated to the same purposes during one hundred and sixty years. John Whipple was licensed in 1674 to keep an ordinary. His south windows looked down upon the "Whipple burying ground," in the adjoining field.

Turpin's inn stood in the Town street on the site, not many years since, occupied by the late Mr. William P. Angell. William Turpin was an Englishman. Nothing is known of his earlier life save that he was here so early as 1685, and that he taught a private school. Finding small encouragement as a teacher of boys, the unfortunate man of letters betook himself to inn keeping for their elders. The transition was not violent or surprising when we remember what manner of men English schoolmasters too often were, in those, and in later days. The old inn, which was kept by several generations of his family, was in building in 1695. Turpin was more popular in his character of landlord than in that of schoolmaster. He had influence enough to obtain two grants of land from the Proprietors—first, for the building, and then for the enlargement of his house. On the 27th of April, 1695,¹ the Town Meeting

1. The following extracts would show that Turpin had gained considerable influence and popularity. The favours shown him were such as would scarcely be granted to the most obliging landlord of our day :

“At a Quarter Meeting, April ye 27, 1695, Thomas Olney, Moderator.
‘Whereas William Turpin hath desired from ye Towne, that they would accommodate him with about eight foote broade of land, and in length, so long as his house in breadth, to take it out of ye highway adjoining to his land,

authorized him "to take eight feet broad from the highway to set his chimney on." In 1702, he received another gift of land for an enlargement. No discord between the Proprietors and the equally thirsty freeholders, arose on either occasion. The house was in some sort, a public institution—the State house of the Colony. The old inn keeper did not loose all sense of the value of learning. In 1695–6, (January 27th,) Epenetus Olney and William Turpin were among the chief petitioners for a lot of land for a school house "about the highway called Dexter's lane, or about Stamper's hill." The Town authorized them to take a lot forty feet square, but as was usual in those days, the undertaking found no support, and nothing more was done. Turpin was probably conversant with all the potations then known to English landlords. This, and the

whereon his house standeth, and for ye use, to set his stack of chimneys upon it, to a Roome or house which he is now building, his request to him is granted.'" This was a "Quarter Day," and the assemblage of freemen from town and country was probably full.

Town Meeting Records, vol. I., p. 43. At a Quarter Meeting, January 27, 1701–2, "Whereas, William Turpin hath desired of the Tounne to grant him a piece of land about foure foote in breadth and about twelve foote in length, adjoining to ye front part of his land where his house stands, fast by his house, his request by ye Tounne is granted."

ample size of his establishment, lent such aid to his popularity, that his house was long the favourite place of meeting of the Assembly and of the Courts. The first William Turpin died July 18, 1709, leaving what was in his day an ample estate. His son succeeded him in his property, his business and his public employments. He was actively engaged in Town affairs of every kind ; 27th July, 1727, the Town Meeting appointed William Turpin to repair the Town's pound and set it up in the piece of land that was stated for a burying place and training field, also to repair the stocks and whipping post, which, it would seem were worn out by zealous usage. He was, in 1722 and 1730, Town Treasurer, an office commonly held by the chief men of the Plantations. His house was, apparently, the largest structure in the Town, until the building of the present State House. It retained its popularity until the decay of the old North End, and the establishment of new hostels near the present centre of the Town. Long after it had ceased to be an inn, it was visited as a relic of colonial times. Seventy years ago, it was still unchanged in appearance,

there being as yet little taste for converting old houses into new ones. The old inn preserved to the last, its antique construction—the massive timbers across its ceilings, high roof, with heavy projecting eaves, dormer windows, and huge stone chimney, and the green, with the unfailing elm in its front. The turf beneath its shadow had been the committee room of colonial legislators, as well as their place of refreshment, and of escape from wearisome debate. All these aided in reviving the memory of local great men, who, beneath its rafters, had steadfastly promulgated their political notions, whether they tended to the honour or to the ruin of the people. The great room, which had served alike for Senate House and for dancing hall, recalled the memory of bygone beauties of the colonial times, and of acts which had gone up for animadversion, or censure, in the Privy Council at Whitehall. It may be regretted that the old historic building had not stood until the pencil or the photograph could perpetuate the semblance of a structure so thoroughly identified with what was most characteristic of Providence in the early days of the last century.

Epenetus Olney was a brother of Thomas Olney, the veteran town clerk. His inn, near the foot of Dexter's (now Olney's) lane, had a longer celebrity than either of its rivals. It was one of the earlier buildings of the Town and had been used by some of his family, for the entertainment of strangers, before it assumed the character of a licensed inn.¹ Standing near the end of the highway from Boston, it enjoyed much of the best patronage of travellers. It was near the Town Mill, and the commercial centre of the Plantations. Its neighbourhood to the most public places of resort, peculiarly fitted it to be the scene of penal discipline. In 1683, (June,) the Assembly ordered stocks to be set up in every town, in order to enforce lessons which had been better, though less cheaply, taught in a village school. The Town Meeting, as was its wont, took its own time to obey the order. On the 21st of August, 1684, reciting a former vote which had failed of its effect, and that the Town was, as they say, "destitute" of stocks, the townsmen accepted the offer of Samuel Whipple, to furnish a pair, made

1. See Staples's Annals.

of stout oak plank. The proposal was received with the same gratitude which attends the foundation of a professorship at the present day. The town stocks were set up in Dexter's lane "over against Epenetus Olney, his dwelling house." It does not appear that Mr. Olney took part in the general thanksgiving. It may be that the Town deemed the lesson most salutary in that neighbourhood. The frequenters of the green in front of Olney's inn, who discussed the latest news, and drank punch on a summer's afternoon, had the advantage of a monition from the stocks "over against them," on the other side of the way. "Their bane and antidote were both before them," and they could make such reflections as they thought fit. Throughout the colonial times, the inns of Olney, Turpin and of Whipple, while it lasted, were the centres of any unusual excitement, and the principal scenes of public events. Thus, 23d September, 1696, the Town Meeting reciting an act establishing an annual fair in Providence, appointed places for setting it up. "Stalls for goods shall be in the highway against William Turpin's land, and in the highway at Epenetus Olney's house, near the

stocks,"—no doubt an effectual persuasive to honest dealing—"and one in the highway against John Whipple's house,"—"they not damnifying the passage." Captain William Hopkins was appointed "clarke of the Market" for the fair. Similar orders were made in 1697 and 1698, when Philip Tillinghast was "clarke." Probably none profited more largely than did these chief inn keepers, by the excitement of the week. We may regret that no farther notice can be found of these earliest exhibitions of the native products and foreign imports of the Colony.

The influence of the most popular landlords suffered occasional eclipse, or the misconduct of the less worthy of the brotherhood brought discredit upon all. On the 5th of June, 1713, on the day when the Town Meeting protested against the first issue of Colonial paper bills, an election of councilmen occurred. Soon after it, Arthur Fenner and his supporters, in the midst of what appears to have been a scene of violent clamour and disturbance, objected that none should be chosen to the council "who kept public houses and retailed strong drink."

The protest was not wholly unreasonable. The councilmen, who were also the licensers, were not the most fitting judges of their own qualifications and conduct as landlords. After a vehement debate and although a valid election had taken place, the meeting actually ordered a new vote, by which other persons were elected. This was but a temporary check to the influence of Olney, Turpin and Whipple—three of the most substantial freeholders of their day. Olney's inn passed to his descendants of several generations with increasing celebrity and repute. It outlived all its rivals. At the revolution Joseph Olney, by a wisdom which did not die with him, discerned that patriotism might be turned to account as a provocative to thirst. He therefore, with an imposing popular ceremonial, dedicated his great elm, as a "Liberty Tree." Under its shade, innumerable glasses were drained to the success of the revolution, many of them by patriots who appear to have given it little other active support. The celebrity of the establishment continued until the later years of the last century, when it began to decay. In 1803, Col. Jere. Olney, of revolutionary

note, built his house (yet standing) upon the green before it. Tavern and Liberty tree passed away together, and thus vanished one of the last memorials of colonial and revolutionary politics.

When Providence had at length its own Court House in Gaol lane, the political importance of the taverns began, though slowly, to decline. Sometimes the Quaker meeting-house, near by, was lent by its grave and peaceful owners, for the promotion of sobriety in public assemblages. The freemen became too numerous to find comfortable shelter in a tavern hall. The commercial period of the Town brought an increasing regard to formality and decorum in Town meetings, by which the ancient yeomanry had set too little store. The country inns retained something of the character of those which had belonged to the "compact part of the Town." At length, these were in turn, destroyed by the railroads, which, assimilating town and country, have worked one of the silent revolutions of our day.

The trade of the Plantations, in despite of its burdens of paper currency, continued slowly, but surely to increase, throughout the middle of the last

century. The facility for building vessels was unsurpassed elsewhere, and navigation had become the favourite pursuit of all young and ambitious men. They did not stay to enquire whether their enterprises were in accordance with the English navigation acts. The chief trade of the Plantations was with the Guinea coast and with the Spanish West Indies, and was aided by distilleries which occupied the most conspicuous sites in the Town street.¹ A few of the more adventurous and wealthy merchants sent vessels to Bordeaux. These brought in cargoes of French goods and wines, which in some manner contrived to escape the notice of the colonial custom house. At this point nothing was needed but some new opportunity. It came with the seven years' war. The colonists had not been unfriendly with the French of the West Indies, and many of them would not be converted into enemies without

1. "Abbott's Still House" was at the southeast corner of Market Square. Angell's near the present Thomas street.

It was an evidence of prosperity, that, in October, 1754, the Council ordered a new road "from the present highway, northward to Smithfield line." Colonial Records, vol. IV., p. 118. There was a manifest increase of the population and value of the "North woods."

their own consent. Whatever their feelings towards their national antagonists, the occasion was eagerly seized by all. To some of the navigators of the Plantations, illicit trade gave no qualms of conscience. Others were equally ready to act as privateersmen against their nominal foes. With the return of peace, the result of these diverse operations, was an increase of wealth such as passed all former experiences in the Town.¹ Better than this was the spirit of enterprise and activity which was awakened, and which, diverted into better and safer channels, was not destined to become extinct.

When the townsmen were ready to count up their gains and losses, it appeared by a list,² that from the 20th of May, 1756 to January 21, 1764, there had been taken or cast away, sixty-five vessels, chiefly schooners and sloops. The names of their commanders were then, and still are, familiar in the Plantations. They were the young and active men of their day, who soon recovered from their losses

1. 18 November, 1762, Governor Ward, in accordance with a vote of the Legislature, appointed a Thanksgiving for successes in the seven years' war.

2. *Providence Gazette*, January 21, 1764.

and became the prosperous merchants of a later time. With the first appearance of the *Gazette*, we learn that private underwriters had, for some time, carried on business in the Town, and (which was less to its advantage) insurers of lottery tickets, November, 1762, (1763). There were private underwriters in Providence at the beginning of the seven years' war, and claims for marine losses. This may be seen in the inventory of Thomas Manchester, who died August, 1756.

With the close of the seven years' war came the "Providence *Gazette*," (October, 1762.) It gives a clearer view than was before attainable of the activity and picturesqueness of the Town street. It is to us surprising that the men of the last century should have been so long in learning the value of such an important instrument of commerce. Boston and New York had discerned it long before, and doubtless reaped the profit of the discovery. During the earlier half of the eighteenth century, the marriages, deaths and obituaries of many prominent Rhode Island men must be sought in the Boston newspapers. The legislature of Rhode Island

ordered that some of the most important legal notices should be published in them. Ex. gr. 12 June, 1758. By "An Act for the equal distribution of Insolvent estates," the times and places for the meeting of the Commissioners are to be posted and also advertised "in one of the Boston newspapers, for three weeks successively." By the end of the seven years' war, the merchants of Providence became weary of the inconvenience, and the *Gazette*¹ was the result of their impatience. Its first publishers were also the first booksellers and stationers of

1. The *Gazette* was first published in a building in the Town street, opposite the Court House, by Sarah and William Goddard. It was removed to Judge Jenckes's store, near the Great Bridge, and published at his book shop just above it, at the sign of Shakspeare's head, August 6, 1763. After May 11, 1765, it was discontinued for four months, the profits being insufficient.

September 19, 1767, the *Gazette* was published by Sarah Goddard and John Carter. It was greatly improved in appearance and typography. On November 12, 1768, it was published by John Carter alone.

"As the office of the publishers was the place of general resort, they occasionally acted as brokers in the sale of merchandize. *Gazette*, January 8, 1763: "To be sold only for want of employ, a likely, spry, healthy negro boy, about ten years of age. Enquire of the printer." See also July 6, 1764.

John Carter had been a pupil of Dr. Franklin. He justly prided himself upon the correctness of his typography, and the fulness of his intelligence. The *Gazette* is one of the best histories of the Revolution. It contains many local details, anecdotes and domestic occurrences not elsewhere to be found. It had no superior among the Colonial newspapers of its day.

the Town. They imported and sold the works of eminent authors, as well as the current English literature. While John Carter lived in Meeting street, in the house yet belonging to his posterity, the *Gazette* was printed and published in a room in the lower story. On the other side he kept his books for sale. Thither resorted the purchasers of Boston magazines and papers, and the few readers of that day.¹

Commerce, stimulated by the war, in its turn aided the movement of the Town towards a new and more convenient centre. When we first gain a clear view of it from the columns of the *Gazette*, the advance had already begun. Few houses were built at the North end and every removal was in a southerly direction. The lower part of the cove was now the scene of the greatest commercial activity. On its east side was water deep enough for brigs and barques, making voyages to London and Dublin. Some of the wealthier houses in the Plantations, as Joseph and William Russell, and Clark & Nightingale,²

1. For some account of William Goddard and of John Carter, the first editors, see Staples's *Annals of Providence*.

2. May, 1773, the ship *Providence* sailed from Clark & Nightingale's wharf, where is now Steeple street.

the chief importers of English and Irish goods, then and long afterwards unladed their cargoes at the warehouses which were behind the residences or offices of their owners, on the Town street. At the corner of a long dock or slip of considerable depth and capacity, now filled up and called Steeple street, was the office of Clark & Nightingale. The house of William Russell was near the foot of Meeting street.¹ His business was very considerable, according to the colonial standard of that day. On the arrival in the cove of a barque or brigantine for Joseph and William Russell, their advertisement of her cargo often filled an entire page of the *Gazette*. These buildings still remain, but few would now search that neighbourhood for memorials of the old foreign commerce of the Town.

The Post office, which always waits upon public convenience, followed the current. On the 16th February, 1758, Mr. Samuel Chace was appointed by Dr. Franklin, as the first postmaster of Providence. At the beginning of the *Gazette*, (1762,) the Post office was in the two storied wooden build-

1. It was, until recently, the residence of Z. Allen, Esq.

ing which recently stood opposite to St. John's Church.¹ In September and December, 1766, it appears, by its advertisements to have been over against the Court House. Even this was too remote from the new place of concourse, and two years later, the Post office looked out upon the square. It was there kept in the building lately removed to make room for the new street behind the old city hall.²

From the beginning of the *Gazette* it received comparatively few advertisements from the North or the South ends of the Town. Most of them came from the neighborhood of the bridge. There all old enterprises were accumulating, and new ones were

1. It was but an appendage to the Bookseller's shop, which occupied the same floor. January 26, 1765.

Gazette, March 16, 1765. "On Tuesday next, the Post office and Printing office will be removed to the house opposite Mr. Nathan Angell's, near the sign of the Golden Eagle, where the business of both will be transacted as usual."

2. The old "Jenckes House."

It is pleasant to discover that there was one place in the Colony which could bid defiance to the iniquitous attempts of the General Assembly, to enforce the circulation of its depreciated paper. *Gazette*, October 21, 1763. "Notice is hereby given that for the future, no letters will be delivered out of the Post Office, without the postage being paid down in silver money, according to the custom at every other Post Office in America. SAMUEL CHACE."

begun. In the earliest days of the *Gazette*, "Cheapside" was known by its present familiar name, and its medley of wares was even greater than at present.

For ten years before the Town Meeting applied itself seriously to its improvement, the public square had been gaining something of its present character. It was called in ordinary discourse "the Market Place." The flats over which the tide had flowed up to the Town street, were now filled, and a long dock, on the site now covered by the Market house, was all that remained of the ancient river bed. Venders of fish and lobsters, and small market vessels monopolized the "Town wharf" on its west side. The south side of the square, which had long borne with the smoke and fumes of "Abbott's still house," was now, (as we have seen,) put to the more seemly uses of the Post office. At the east end of the dock was the old "hayward," with its unfailing annoyances, which maintained their position until many years later.¹ On the east side of the Market Place

1. Several years before the building of the Market House, ineffectual attempts were made for the public accommodation. Town Meeting, 19 April, 1758: "Voted that Mr. David Bucklin be allowed the liberty to erect a public market house on the Town's land near the bridge—that the Town Clerk give a

was a steep bank of earth, the foot of the ancient hill. On this bank, next to Hanover, (now College,) street, stood the house of Dr. Ephraim Bowen, next north of it was the house of Governor Jenckes, and next the inn of Daniel Abbott. On the north side of the square was a row of old wooden houses of two stories, with heavy projecting gables, the like of which may still be seen in the lower part of South Main street. The landscape was completed by the bridge, then only eighteen feet wide, with its creaking draw, and the whipping-post as its only architectural ornament. The square itself was cumbered with heaps of stones, and served as the general depository of the rubbish of the neighborhood. Its condition was not improved during the times of winter snow, and of the spring currents descending from the hill. Complaints of this abominable quagmire had at times been uttered, and in 1767-9, came the suggestion that an improvement of it would add

lease thereof to the said Bucklin for the term of seven years. Provided the said market do not incommode the hayward." The undertaking was premature and was never executed. The "hayward," i. e., the public hay scales and market, remained at the east end of the market house until near the end of the last century.

to the beauty as well as to the profits of the Town. There were now some men of liberal tastes and education, who could give force to arguments like these. Seven years went by before they could prevail with the thrifty generation, tolerant of nuisances, who judged that ill savours were of the same nature as taxes, and quite as endurable. The inevitable lottery of those days, was the first resort of the builders of the new Market House.¹ So little care has been bestowed upon the documents of the old Town that we are left without information as to the projectors or the cost of the new structure. It is scarcely mentioned in the Town records, and we only learn from the *Gazette* that the corner-stone was laid by Nicholas Brown on the 8th June, 1773. We have no account of the ceremonial.

This was the most costly undertaking upon which the Town had, as yet, ventured. Other buildings of the same date, (1774,) give evidence of taste, and probably had the same designers. The Town then began to assume the form which it has since preserved, and will probably retain. The old building

1. *Gazette*, January 16, 1773.

is the monument of the ending of an old epoch, and of the beginning of a new one. The agricultural village had now developed into the modern commercial town. The new municipal edifice did it no discredit. Its proportions were exceedingly good, and it had ample provision for the public needs even of a much later day. Something more will be said of it in another paper, and of the economy of the townsmen, who compelled their officers to provide their own places of official business, while the Market House chambers were rented for the benefit of the Town treasury. The same thrifty spirit prompted the permission to the Masonic fraternity to build the upper hall as their own property. This last structure has a history of its own. After it had long served for the convivial and other assemblies of the brotherhood, the society fell under the displeasure of politicians who sought to make profit at their expense. In their days of poverty and eclipse, a generation ago, their assemblies ceased, and their hall was rented. Many remember it in their earlier days as the chief place of public lectures. Its remaining ornaments, full length, but not well attested portraits of King

Solomon and Hiram of Tyre, the work of an English artist, (of about 1795,) named Sugden—gave to boys of the period, their first conception of the splendors of an oriental monarchy. His tinsel crown and grizzly beard gave emphasis to the sayings of the wise man of old, and inspired respect for the wisdom of a society which had so profited by his precepts.¹

When the square had at last been brought into a respectable condition, the chief shops, both for necessities and for luxuries, speedily gathered

1. During the century of the existence of the old Hall it has been the scene of much local and authentic history. Beyond this—whatever has been wanting in fact, has been supplied by the imagination. During the Anti-Masonic excitement of fifty years ago, reports became current, and some were doubtless persuaded to believe that divers unfaithful brethren had expiated with their lives, the breach of their Masonic obligations. In the "testimony" received by a committee of the Rhode Island General Assembly, appointed to investigate these and the like charges, (1832,) Abraham Wilkinson is represented as haranguing a crowd in the Market place, near the Masonic hall, and estimating the number of those who had suffered death in the lodge room as about five hundred. Report, (1832,) pp. 46, Appendix 60.

In the heat of partizanship, it never occurred to the men of those days, that the sudden and unexplained disappearance of so many well known citizens, without any solicitude or enquiry on the part of their creditors, was something wholly foreign to the habits of the Town. But anything served as an argument in the politics of that time.

around it. It was a sufficient direction to the readers of the *Gazette* that the advertisers were "opposite the market," or "near the market." The annoyances which had been borne with patience by a generation not delicate in its sensibilities, were not speedily cleared away. Even the name of the Market place was not undisputed. The Fenner family, by their advertisements and in other ways, tried to fasten upon it the name of "Fenner's square."¹ The attempt met with no favourable response from the public. Occupations not usually attended by any benediction when established in populous neighborhoods, lingered during several years.²

But with the increase of commerce, manufacturers of soft soap, etc., gradually yielded to more profitable tenants.³ Law and insurance followed mercantile business, and by the close of the Revolution the

1. *Gazette*, March 9, 1776.

2. *Gazette*, January 2d, 1773. "John Westcott, butcher, at the east end of the Great bridge, continues the Butchering business in every part. He hath provided himself a large copper for scalding hogs, adjoined to the Market place."

3. October 19, 1776. "To be sold by John Chace at his shop near the Market," a list of drugs, groceries, etc.

square had assumed the character which it has borne to the present day.¹

At the close of the seven years' war, Providence was the centre of a populous region, and possessed much of the West India trade of the interior of Massachusetts. A considerable variety of merchandize could be furnished from its shops and wharves. Some distress followed the reaction after the war, but it was of no long continuance. The new regulations of trade soon provided causes of dissatisfaction, and the history of the Revolution began. But while it yet lingered, the Plantations enjoyed as great a prosperity as the legislature, with its paper money laws, would permit. With the changes of the times much of the old business of the Town has become greatly contracted, and some has become wholly obsolete. Its distilleries, once the chief support of its African trade, now require some search for their discovery. Auction sales of negroes have passed away with the old inns.² Employers of labour

1. December 7, 1782. "The INSURANCE OFFICE is removed from the house of John Jenckes, Esq., to a room over the Market House."—*Gazette*.

2. October 14, 1766, a negro was advertised for sale by auction, at the Crown Coffee house, opposite to the Court House. Such sales were not infrequent throughout those years.

would not now be earnest competitors for the refuse of the jail.¹

The shops of Providence were now conspicuous, not merely through their advertisements, but by huge signs, or by emblems and devices after the old fashion of Europe. Many of these were suspended from projecting beams, or from a gallows set across the sidewalk, and are thus represented in the rude wood cuts of the *Gazette*. These were the trade-marks of that generation, and were executed with the best artistic skill which the Town then afforded, and which, it must be acknowledged, was not great. The signs often had little reference to the business carried on below. We know not when they were first set up, but in 1762 these ornaments of traffic everywhere solicited the custom of the wayfarer. "James Green, at the sign of the Elephant," just

1. October 4, 1766. Next to the advertisement of a negro boy, appears this: "To be sold at Public Vendue to the highest bidder, at the goal in Providence on Wednesday the 24th of this instant October, by order of the Superior Court pursuant to his sentence, One Joseph Hart, a stout, able bodied man, for the term of three years, to satisfy the damages and costs of his prosecution, convicted of stealing sundry goods from Mr. Obadiah Sprague of North Providence.

WILLIAM WHEATON, Sheriff."

above Steeple street, long sold at wholesale and retail, Brazieri and Piece goods, rum, indigo, and tea. A like medley constituted the stock of most other tradesmen of that day. "The new brick house" of Governor Elisha Brown, at the North end, had some of the most conspicuous and fashionable shops. There Jeremiah Fones Jenkins, a man of much note in his day, and a royalist, a few years later dispensed such luxuries of silks, linen, scarlet and sky-blue broadcloths, as satisfied the needs of his generation. His advertisements are among the most frequent in the earlier *Gazettes*, and give a lively picture of the gay colours in which the more wealthy townsmen arrayed themselves on Sundays and feast days. He was an eminent Freemason, and was arrested as a suspected monarchist during the Revolution. He did not find that dealing in such finery was a road to ruin. With increasing prosperity, he bought, some years later, the property at the corner of the bridge, which afterwards belonged to the Washington Insurance Company. There he carried on the same business on a yet larger scale, until 1812, when he died rich. His most conspicuous rivals were Joseph

and William Russell, (October, 1762,) "at the sign of the Golden Eagle near the Court House." These offered velvets, broadcloths, superfine, of scarlet for men's and women's long cloaks, also paper, looking-glasses and books. Near them, (*Gazette*, November 12, 1768,) "Clark & Nightingale at their store, sign of the Fish and Frying Pan, opposite Oliver Arnold, Esq.," had "just imported from London, a large and complete assortment of English and Indian goods suitable for the season which they will sell on the very lowest terms for cash. Also the best of Bohea and Pepper by the hundred, dozen, or single pound. W. India and N. E. Rum, Sugar, Melasses, etc."

They long outlasted their neighbours of the "Golden Eagle." Under this ominous sign they became one of the foremost mercantile houses of their day, continuing until the memory of some now living. Their houses were two of the finest in Providence. The house of Colonel Nightingale was the residence of the late John Carter Brown.

Knight Dexter, nearly opposite, (on the site of the old city tavern,) sold in the shop beneath it, at the sign of the "Boy and Book," broadcloths, linens,

etc. Pewter, also Bibles and spelling books. These he was ready to exchange for "old tenor, or lawful money of this Colony and Connecticut, at an exchange of $23\frac{1}{3}$ for for one." Thomas Pelham, near the sign of the Lion, in Constitution Hill, made and sold pig-tail, and cut and rolled tobacco. More needful trades seem to have lacked due encouragement, for the *Gazette* (Feb. 19, 1763,) announced that "a brazier, a potter, a stocking weaver, and a clock and watch maker are much wanted in the Town, there being none nearer than Boston." Richard Olney's inn was at the sign of the "Crown." This old two-storied wooden building, two doors above the Court House and nearly opposite to the square, was removed in 1879. That it was a place of repute is evident from its being occasionally the place of meeting of the Town Council.¹ From the "Crown Coffee House," (July 11, 1767,) "The stage coach sets out every Tuesday morning for Boston." It was owned by Thomas Sabin, who announced that "said Sabin intends following the business all the summer season." He had done so during the sum-

1. July 21, 1764. 1766, September 27.

mer of 1766. During some previous years, Sabin had proposed to despatch a coach to Boston whenever a sufficient number of passengers applied. The business had increased so far beyond his expectations that in 1767, he intended to send one every Tuesday morning throughout the summer.

Smith and Sabin had a shop called¹ "The Sultan Mustapha." It first was kept at the corner of the Town street and Market square.² It derived its name from the sign of the "head of Mustapha Sultan of the Turkish Empire." This appalling way mark served the peaceful purpose of attracting buyers of "dry goods, both East and West Indian, at the lowest rates." The name proved too long for the memory of customers, who abbreviated it to the "Sultan's head" and the "Turk's head." Its grim and frowning aspect made it one of the most conspicuous of street ornaments, during fifty years. This well remembered piece of wood carving had many owners, and during fifty years attracted buyers to many localities. It long adorned "Whitman's corner." There it found a resting place until the great gale of

1. July 9, 1763.

2. January 2d, 1764.

September, 1815. In the general wreck of the neighborhood it was swept away, and finally lost to sight beneath the waters of the cove.

At the North end, (October 6, 1763,) Simeon Thayer, afterwards of Revolutionary fame, made and sold at the sign of the Hat, bag wigs, paste, brigadiers, scratch, dress and Tye wigs. As if these were not enough, he adds, "and all other sorts of wigs." All this he did with the assistance of Michael Cumings, late of London. Thayer may have caught some martial enthusiasm from his work, which blazed out in later days. His success awakened the envy of a rival, who thus gave a defiant challenge a few days later, (October 22, 1763): "Thomas Healy, cuts, curls and frizzes gentlemen's and ladies' hair, and engrafts a tail, to their entire satisfaction. He engages to give the Ladies equal satisfaction with any London hair cutter in Providence."

At the same date we learn that the distill-house of Mr. James Angell was in full operation, "not far above the great bridge."¹ We may trust that it was not as an emblem of the hospitality to be enjoyed

1. It stood where is now the Baptist Meeting-House yard.

within, that "William Earl, who formerly kept the sign of the White Bear in Newport," announced that "he now keeps the same sign in Broad street, near the Court House, where gentlemen may be well entertained." "April 28, 1764, Joseph Olney, at the sign of the Golden Bull at the North end, sold hardware and rum, and other equally well assorted merchandise. Nathaniel Balch, at the sign of the Hat, near Capt. Joseph Olney's, sold stoneware and decanters, pipes, pepper, spices, etc., Chesire cheese, also hats, flour, chocolate, . . . also a few lottery tickets. 1764, Robert Perrigo, cordwainer, at the sign of the Boot, also sold butter, by the small quantity."

October 8, 1763. During the same years, Thomas and Benjamin Lindsey—he who lured the Gaspee to her ruin—announced that they "ply twice a week between Newport and Providence." They had a rival in Hoystead Hacker, afterwards of the Navy of the Revolution. He informs the public that his sloops run every day between Newport and Providence, from the wharf opposite Dr. Gibbs's."¹ Sin-

1. The tide then flowed up to the Town street.

gle passage nine pence, November 7, 1767. Edward Thurber's Brazen Lion is depicted in the *Gazette*, (February 13, 1768,) swinging from its gallows, near the North end. The history and fortunes of the "Bunch of Grapes," which now ornaments the rooms of the Historical Society, have already been written. South of Market Square, John and Nicholas Brown had their several places of business, but they had no "signs." The old Abbott House had now become the property of Jabez Bowen, the nephew of its founder, who was afterwards Lieutenant Governor. He lived there many years, and there sold drugs and dye-woods. Somewhat later a clothier or cloth dresser at the North end hung up a huge portrait of the sun. Under it were the words, "The best clothier," which he intended to be read, "the best clothier under the sun."

While the Town street was thus resplendent with signs of the principal dealers, inferior tradesmen who established themselves in the neighborhood contented themselves with announcing that they were "near the Lion," or "the Golden Eagle," etc., which thus did duty for the whole vicinity, with no small saving of expense.

Whoever at this period was not satisfied with the bargains offered under these and the like symbols of traffic in the Town street, and crossed the bridge in hope of better fortune on the West side, found there few shops to reward his search. After a few paces, he first encountered the inn of Luke Thurston, at the sign of the "Brigantine." Thurston was a man of some local note in his day. When there came a slight increase of population on the West side, the Town Council deemed it politic to hold an occasional session there, and Thurston had the honour of entertaining them. 1763. A few steps farther on, (May 9, 1767,) Jonathan Russell offered English and India goods, under the sign of the "Black Boy." Not far off, Silas Downer, a graduate of Harvard College, (a contemporary of John Adams,) in addition to his duties as an attorney, proposed to write letters to their friends abroad, for people who were unable to do it for themselves. The West side at that day furnished but few advertisers. But among them was one who in his variety of occupations, distanced all competitors in the Town street. October, 1762, Samuel Carew kept a tavern, also a livery stable,

and an apothecary's shop, and practiced physic at the sign of the "Pestle and Mortar," and afterwards, (1767,) at the sign of the "Traveller," "near the Meeting-House, on the West side." From the length of time during which Carew pursued his vocation unmolested, we may infer that the people of his day were vigorous in constitution, and tolerant of blunders, and set down all recoveries to the credit of the practitioner, while they ascribed any mishaps from his prescriptions to "natural causes," as at a much later day.

It seems singular that so simple an expedient as that of numbering the houses, did not suggest itself, even in a closely built city like London, until late in the last century. The Plantations adhered with their usual tenacity to old usages, and kept their accustomed signs long after they had been abandoned elsewhere. Even here they were becoming obsolete, and as they swung to and fro, in the winter wind, their creaking sounds called forth no pious ejaculations from those endeavouring to slumber in their neighborhood. The September gale, (1815,) with its wide-spread destruction, brought

some long-needed reforms. The disastrous accidents which it occasioned, led to the removal of the old signs projecting over the highways, and one of the antique and picturesque displays of the Town street came to its final close.

These may suffice for specimens of trade and its decorations, at the close of the seven years' war. The commerce which it promoted was unlike that of more recent days. Great Britain bore most of the expense, and the colonies reaped the harvest. Yet, with all their increase, the Plantations were not deemed sufficiently important to have a custom house of their own. All vessels entered and cleared at Newport. There was but one officer of revenue in Providence, the "Surveyor of the King's Customs," commonly styled—being the only one—"the King's Officer." He was appointed by "The Commissioners of His Majesty's Revenue" in Boston, and each new vacancy called forth angry complaints, that none but a Massachusetts man was ever deemed worthy of this royal favour.¹ The utter loss of the

1. John (afterwards Sir John) Temple, Surveyor General in Boston, had jurisdiction over the northern revenue district, in 1774.

Custom House documents, leaves us to mere conjectures respecting the extent and value of the colonial trade. It was not until after the Revolution, that the port was indulged with a full staff of officers of the revenue, and with the patronage which insured some support to a national administration.¹

The increase of moneyed wealth appeared in the erection of new and more spacious houses in the Town street. Among these was the residence of Benjamin Cushing, the first tax payer of his day.² It originally stood upon North Court street, at the corner of the Town street, and has but lately been removed half way up the hill. The house of John Carter, in Meeting street, was the first fruit of successful journalism in Providence. John Updike, a prosperous navigator, built at the foot of the same street. Brick houses of ample size, and of good architectural design, now became frequent. In earlier years, there had been a lack of good building material, as well as of the wealth to employ it. Stone, except for chimneys, had been beyond the

1. *Gazette*, October 5, 1763. November 19, 1763.

2. It was lately Mr. Bridgham's.

means of the earlier generations, and but few bricks were made in this neighborhood. The house now standing upon the Butler Asylum estate, was built by "Justice Richard Browne" far back in the last century. He was, besides his farming, one of the earliest paper makers, carrying on the business upon the grounds occupied by the print works of the late P. Allen. He completed his century and his life in 1812. This is probably the oldest building in the city of this material, and it is but in part of brick. This extravagance found no imitators until after the middle period of the last century, when a few of the more substantial inhabitants ventured upon a like experiment. The old brick block near the Church of the Redeemer, in North Main street, is styled in the earliest advertisements in the *Gazette*, "the new brick dwelling house towards the upper end of the Town street." April 23, 1763. It was built by Lieutenant-Governor Elisha Brown, in his more prosperous days. Only the south half of it remains. It would scarcely have been accounted an architectural ornament in any subsequent generation. Of a few years later date, (1774,) were the houses of

Joseph Brown, (now the Providence Bank,) of Nicholas Brown, on the west side of the Town street; and of John Brown, which has disappeared. At the foot of Planet street is the house, where in later years, the affair of the Gaspee was arranged, and which was afterwards the residence of Welcome Arnold. These, and other edifices of like cost and style, (such as the house of William Russell, lately owned by Z. Allen, Esq.,) yet bear testimony to the taste and the success of the last colonial generation. These were farther displayed in works from which its predecessors would have shrunk. The oldest college building and the new Market House are sufficient proofs of advancing wealth and knowledge.

With this regard to the comfort of the living, there was now an unaccustomed respect to the memory of the dead. During the earlier generations, these had slumbered in the household graves, with nothing but the memory of survivors to mark their resting places, or at best, only rude headstones, without inscriptions. The poverty in which this seeming neglect had its beginning had passed away,

and the religious fancies which had approved it, had lost their influence. Men now began to claim kindred with those whom their fathers had left beyond the sea. As the century wore on, the sentiment began to manifest itself in the armorial bearings carved upon tombstones of Braintree slate, by which the fourth generation in Providence sought to preserve the memory of their English lineage. Massachusetts had done this long before. There was, until late in the century, but little encouragement to such workmanship in the Plantations. The earliest headstones must have been wrought in Boston or Newport. They were made here by the middle of the last century.¹ These were probably all of that Braintree slate, so enduring and so plainly sculptured, which abound in the old North Burial Ground. But by 1760, there were monuments which might compare with the sculptured stones which an earlier generation in Massachusetts had imported from England. There were none but of slate or sandstone. So late as 1796, the earliest marble slabs, of no extraordinary pretension, were ordered from Attleborough.

1. John Anthony Angell, stone cutter, died May 15, 1756, leaving as his most substantial assets £80 worth of gravestones.

Their sculptor, (Mr. Tingley,) did not commence his labours in Providence until the early years of the present century, (1811).¹

The ship-building and foreign commerce of the Town, was, in great part, carried on from the cove and from the stream above it, until many years after the Revolution. An established trade is ever tenacious of its early habitation, and here, as elsewhere, it made a stout fight before it was finally expelled. The lease granted, (as we have seen, 18 April, 1753,) for ship-building in the Mooshassuc, was followed up by a long series of favours by the Townsmen to the interests of the "North End."² In 1763, a lottery was granted to raise £90 to build a draw in Weybossett Bridge.³ In 1767, the Town Meeting authorized the Council to repair the "Workhouse wharf." This stood upon the west side of the Mooshassuc, a short distance below Mill bridge.⁴ Such a navigation

1. The first marble cutters in Providence commenced their operations soon after the year 1800.

2. See the "scheme," *Gazette*, March 26, 1763.

3. £90 lawful money, "for building a drawbridge in Providence so as vessels may pass up and down the river."

4. Much of the oakum used in the ship-building of the Town was picked at the workhouse. This seems to have been the chief business of its inmates.

was not without its dangers. On the 6th of March, 1767, the *Gazette* contained a narrative which was repeated in days long afterwards, before human life had come to be as little valued as it now is. A large vessel which had been launched above the cove on the first of March, a few days later, passed through the draw at Weybossett. A son of Mr. David Wilkinson, incautiously looking out from the cabin, was instantly crushed and killed amid the horror of a multitude of spectators, who were powerless to avert the catastrophe. When the bridge was rebuilt in 1792, a new generation had gained the control of the Town, and the draw gave occasion to acrimonious disputes in newspapers and Town Meetings, between the partizans of the old and the new, and between the North and South ends, and the East and West sides.¹ But the West and the South united were not yet strong enough to overthrow the supremacy of the North end, and the draw was for the last time rebuilt.² Few vessels were now launched

1. This belongs to the paper upon the Town Meeting.

2. The new bridge of 1792 was one hundred and sixty feet long, twenty-two feet wide, and was supported by two wooden tressels and by two stone pillars. Morse's Geography, London ed., pp. 341-2.

in the cove, and the Town soon afterwards parted without regret, from this cradle of its early navigation.

Soon after the Town had gathered around its present commercial centre, the citizens resolved to make their chief place of concourse a school of instruction in sound morals. The public whipping-post, was therefore established upon the Great Bridge, where its admonitions could be profitable to the greatest number. The *Gazette* occasionally chronicles an execution of this sort. The Town Council found in it an effectual means of grace for those who showed any disrespect for its authority. Their example was followed by the sheriff of the county. In lack of any reformatory institutions, this was the statutory penalty for sundry criminals who might profit by it at the present day. It had the certain advantage of driving offenders into other States. The discipline of those days was no mere formality. The *Gazette* of June 25, 1767, describes a moral spectacle of this kind, of more than usual edification. After it, the convict was sold for one year to make reparation for the property which he

had stolen, and to pay the state its costs. The reporter mentions that the yells of the patient, resounding through the neighborhood gave evidence of the conscientious discharge of the duty of the constable.¹ The exhibition was not infrequent after every term of the court, until the end of the first ten years of this century. It then became a subject of complaint, not as offending the sensibilities of the townsmen, but as a hindrance to business. It was then removed to the Court House parade, where it continued in full activity during twenty years more.

The growth of the "West side," was preceded by the settlement of the Proprietary lands, and by the formation of new towns. In the earlier part of the last century, "the compact part of Providence Town" had become a seaport, with commercial and quarantine regulations, and with ever increasing disputes with its agricultural population, west of the "seven mile line." The estate of the Proprietors

1. The spectacle was sometimes varied by the addition of the pillory, or the process of cropping and branding. This was particularly frequent after the Revolution, when the deficiency of the circulating medium tempted some ill-advised citizens to supply it by the manufacture of counterfeit coin. See April 2, 1785, September 17, 1785.

had been, in great part, disposed of. New highways were opening towards every part of the county, and a new population created a demand for shops and inns on the west side. The Town Council had now more occupation than ever before. In 1749, another road towards Warwick was ordered, with the old indefinite bounds and direction, and with the like opportunity to the committee to serve their own interests. The state of improvements on the west side may be conjectured from the phraseology of this last vote. The new road to Warwick was to commence "from the parting of the paths, by John Hoyle's house"—then on the borders of the woodlands,—and was to run thence southward to Pawtuxet. Yet another highway in the same direction, was ordered in 1750.

The opening of Benefit street required a number of new ways to connect it with the Town street. They were made with no system, but as private owners found that their interests required. The first of these which is mentioned in the council's book, was laid out between the houses of Thomas Harding and of Governor Stephen Hopkins, who was always

active in new enterprises. This was ordered January 11, 1752, to extend eastward to the new highway. Local hindrances intervened, for it was not completed until 1771.¹ The first bank in Providence, and the second in New England, was established there in 1791, and the popular name of the thoroughfare was "Bank lane." Early in this century it received the legal title of "Hopkins street." The original banking house yet remains there. Many of these new ways had long before been footpaths leading to the pastures or "home-lots," and were now widened, defined, and converted into streets. They were, however, from their inferior width and importance, popularly called "lanes" or "alleys." The dates of some of these will indicate the quiet growth of Providence, even under the huge burden of Colonial paper bills. Some of the lateral highways from the Town street, were gifts from the neighbouring proprietors. May 25, 1762, Bowen's alley, (now called Howland street,) was given to the Town by Benjamin Bowen and Nathaniel Packard, the owners of the adjoining lands, 6½ feet by each. In 1771, a

1. See "Blue Book," in the Town Clerk's office.

committee of the Town Meeting advised the opening of a highway through the estate of Amaziah Waterman.¹ It was first intended to be laid at some distance to the northward of its present site where it would have been an extension to Angell street. The new street was first ordered to be laid on the north side of Mr. Waterman's house. After the usual petition, remonstrance, protest and delay attending such proceedings, the street was finally established (November, 1772,) where it now is. In February, 1784, it was widened to forty feet. After divers changes of name it has become Waterman street, and a memorial of one of the original proprietary estates of the Plantations.

The years of prosperity between the Seven Years' War and the Revolution were a time of much activity in local improvements. They were soon interrupted and were not resumed until the century was drawing to a close. Thus, on the sixth of May, 1771, a highway was ordered through the land of Ann Tillinghast. This was the beginning of the present Transit street. The name was intended as a memo-

1. April 17. See Blue Book of streets revised, 1771.

rial of the observations of the transit of Venus, made in 1769, from the summit of the hill—the first scientific effort of the Town. Hanover street was first opened, when the meeting house, (afterwards the Town House,) was built. There had been previously a footpath, leading to the burial place of the family of Chad Brown, and to their pastures beyond. The original street was scarcely twenty feet wide. The Town House had, during many years, a grass plat on its north front, on its west side was the burial place. Both disappeared when Hanover street was widened in 1790. Thenceforth the Town House abutted upon the highway. This was now twenty-eight feet wide. The name was given in honour of the reigning family of Great Britain. It lasted about eighty years. On the 21st of April, 1772, the Town Council ordered that Stephen Hopkins, Joseph Brown and Caleb Harris lay out a highway from Benefit street to the College land. This was at the request of the College, two of its chief officers being of the committee. This was the original College street. Hanover street retained its Colonial name more than thirty years

longer. It is so styled on Daniel Anthony's map of 1803. In 1806 it was changed to College street.¹

This, with the loss of the colonial designation of King street shows something of the character of the times, the indifference to historical relics, and the need-less apprehension of the spread of monarchical ideas.

In 1772, several new lanes were ordered, from the Town street to the water side. One of these was on the south side of Oliver Arnold's brick house just above the Court House parade. So many years had gone by since the old dispute over these ancient alleys that it may well surprise us that the townsmen persisted in repeating their mistake,—that they had learned so little of the requirements of trade, and had made no progress in sanitary knowledge.

On the 4th of May, 1772, the Town Council ordered a highway to be made from Olney's lane over the summit of the hill, southward to Jail lane, now Meeting street. The new street, like the original Benefit street, was to be forty feet wide. There was

1. Council Records. The neighbouring George street had not a colonial origin like Hanover street. It was not opened until 1794, (August,) and was named after Mr. George H. Burrough, a proprietor of lands in the vicinity.

a vigorous opposition because of the design of the projectors, to carry forward the new highway in a straight line through the college grounds, so that the building would have looked down immediately upon the street. The opposers were of the foremost men of their day. They were able to delay public action until the present route was accepted as a compromise. Prospect street was established substantially as it now is, September 5, 1785. Its name remains, although it has become wholly inappropriate. Once, from the highest ridge of the hill it commanded picturesque views in every direction over the Town and Bay. At present, through the want of foresight or public spirit in former generations, there is no point from which the public have a general view of the city or of its waters.

After 1772, the increasing gloom of the political sky gave the citizens little encouragement to improve their highways or even their private estates. Few, if any, houses were built during the Revolution. The activity of the Town took another direction. The want of the most needful supplies gave a new impulse to home manufactures and to foreign trade.

The navigators and merchants did not forget the lessons of the Seven Years' War. The Marquis Chastellux¹ says that the English abandoned all other objects, in order to blockade the French fleet in Newport, and that they scarcely took a single sloop, coming to Rhode Island, or to Providence. The files of the *Gazette* confirm the statement, and show that the arrivals and departures of vessels were numerous throughout the war. Privateering augmented several fortunes, and furnished some foreign supplies. But with all its compensations, the Town stood still until the war was at an end. The earliest effect of peace was a farther division and improvement of the old home-lots. On the 8th of July, 1782, and 5th of May, 1783, a road was ordered to be laid out "from the Baptist Meeting-House to the head of Ferry lane." The chief promoters of the design were Moses Brown and Nathan Waterman, the principal landholders of the neighborhood. The engineering difficulties were so great, in proportion to the means at their command, that the work was not completed until May 5, 1788. It was com-

1. *Memoirs*, vol. I., p. 202. Translation.

mended by the *Gazette* of that day as a wonderful evidence of public spirit. It did not occur to the writer that Messrs. Brown and Waterman were adding quite as largely to their own, as to the public wealth.

It would appear from the records of deeds, as well as from old houses yet remaining, that the intervening cross streets were largely built up and occupied before Benefit street had any inhabitants except at its north and south ends. This was its condition when the Marquis Chastellux saw it in 1780-2. He says that Providence "has only one street which is very long, the suburb which is very considerable, is on the other side of the river." "The Town is handsome. The houses are not spacious, but well built, and properly arranged within." His description becomes less flattering as he proceeds to say, "its commerce is chiefly distilling and the slave trade," with which, however, neither he nor any one else found any fault at that day. Chastellux, as second in command to Rochambeau, had ample experience of the hospitality of the dwellers in the Town street, and he was not wanting in due acknowledgment.

Bowen street is of 1786. It was named from the distinguished physician who had long owned the estate through which it passes. The property had been, (1785,) purchased by Philip and Zachariah Allen, who were the authors of this improvement of the neighborhood. In preparing the ground near the Town street, a discovery was made such as would now attract much attention from local antiquaries. The site was, in 1785, part of a kitchen garden. In pulling up a cabbage, an astonished workman found an Indian skull entangled in its roots. Farther research disclosed many Indian skeletons and utensils. The spot had been a burial place or a battle-field, in pre-historic times. The existence of this place of sepulture had been unknown and unsuspected. It awakened some curiosity, but as was usual in much later days, no care was taken to preserve the remains. No Indian was left, to relate any tradition of their date or history.

With the increasing commerce of the port, came a demand for new houses at the south end. In 1790, the Town Council appointed a committee to open highways eastward from the Town street, between

Power and Transit streets. But notwithstanding every endeavor to stay the westward progress of the Town, very few houses had, as yet, been built eastward of Benefit street. Lieutenant-Governor Daniel Abbott, the chief land-holder of his day, (who died in 1760,) was a man of enlightened forecast. He had laid out streets at Tockwotton, by a plat which may be seen in the City Clerk's office. But he was far in advance of the commercial necessities of his time. A generation went by before his hopes were fulfilled. About the year 1790, John Brown, one of the foremost American merchants of his day, availed himself of the advantages of the site, and built the first wharves and storehouses in the locality now called India point.

So early as January, 1773, there had been a project of a bridge at the lower ferry, now India point. But after much discussion, in Town Meeting and *Gazette*, the difficulty of securing £1,800 needed for the purpose, effectually quieted the agitation. In 1792, it was resumed by John Brown alone, and carried to a successful completion. It was one of his most useful enterprises. He gave to it the name

of the chief object of his admiration, and the ancient "lower ferry," or "Fuller's Ferry," was succeeded by "Washington Bridge."¹ Tockwotton then became the scene of an activity before unknown. Thence, the first vessels sailed from Providence beyond the Cape of Good Hope. Rope-walks encroached upon ancient meadows, and shipwrights and navigators were among the chief occupants of the new streets.

The success of the new bridge soon stimulated another undertaking of the same kind. The old "upper ferry," at "narrow passage," had long outlasted the generations which came slowly and at long intervals from Rehoboth, for a little barter trade in the shops of the Town street. Providence was now

1. At the June session of the Assembly, 1792, John Brown and others received a charter of incorporation by the name of the "Providence South Bridge Society, in the Town of Providence." In June, 1807, the charter was amended by conforming the name of the corporation to the popular name which had been given to the bridge by its founder. It then became the "Providence Washington Bridge Society."

The "Central Bridge," popularly known as "Red bridge," had its origin in the same year with the bridge at the South Ferry, but it was not completed until a year later. A subscription for a bridge at the Upper Ferry was commenced in 1792, and public meetings were held for the same object. See *Providence Gazette*, Saturday, February 25, 1792.

the market of a large surrounding country, and required an avenue not liable to obstruction by the waves and ice of the Seekonk. A year after the lower bridge had been completed, a new one, a work of much less cost and hazard was begun. The "upper ferry," which had been an object of such care among the ancient townsmen, gave place to "Red bridge." It has been during three generations the favourite haunt of youthful fishermen, (as the ferry had been of a long succession of boys before them,) who are thus unconsciously preserving one of the ancient traditions of the Town.

There was at this period, but one improvement of any importance at the North end. The old "Country road" to Pawtucket, (1684,) had curved around the sandhill at the burial ground, ascended it by the dismal thoroughfare afterwards known as Sexton street, and descended it on the north with another bend towards the east. The Town was now able to afford that better access, which its increasing intercourse with Boston required, but which had been too costly for the taxpayers of former days. In 1791, the sandhill on the east side of the burial ground was

cut through, down to the present level of the highway. There are some sufferers by every change, however beneficial. There was, accordingly no lack of wrathful speaking and newspaper writing, by those whose gardens were bisected, and whose houses and barns were left on opposite sides of the street when the old highway was removed to the eastward. But all others acknowledged the advantage. An increasing traffic rolled along the new avenue. The old one, (now Sexton street,) was left without disturbance to the solemnity of its funeral processions.

Increasing commerce hastened other changes in the centre of the Town. There had been a row of wharves and docks extending into the cove behind the warehouses and dwellings of Cheapside. This unhealthy arrangement, which continued in South Water street until the gale of 1815, was sooner terminated on the north side of the bridge. A hope of profit fortunately concurred with sanitary requirements. North Water street was established February 19, 1792. Until 1814, it extended only to Steeple street. It was not completed in its present length until the days of the Blackstone Canal. Thus

was finally obliterated every trace of the ancient shore.¹

This may serve as a hasty view of the growth of the old Town, in the closing years of the last century. After this, the east side of the "Great Salt River" seemed to stand still during several years, while a new mart of trade was rising in full view. The "West side" was now threatening speedily to cope with the east, both in Town meetings and in private enterprise. Westminster street, which in 1771, had but four houses on its south side, hoped, at no distant period, to be a successful rival of the old Town street. Rivals appeared in the new centre of trade, who disputed the pre-eminence of the men of the last century, as these had subverted the rule

1. In 1792, it became necessary to rebuild Weybossett Bridge. The new bridge was forty feet shorter than the old one, and the river-bed was narrowed forty feet to provide for North and South Water streets. The new bridge was intended to be fifty six feet wide with a draw.

In 1814 the Town authorized the owners of warehouse lots north of Steeple street, to fill them up, and to make a new street as far as Smith's bridge. Several delays and extensions of time were granted, and the street was not completed until January, 1825. The street was then established as a public highway by the name of North Water street. It was afterwards widened by the Canal Company, and named Canal street, almost the last remaining vestige of their unprofitable labours.

of the old Proprietors. The closing years of the last century may be accounted the end of the old "Plantations." The signs of a new period were on every side. The Town had long ago outgrown its infancy, needed no charity from its neighbours, was now the capital of a State,—and had assumed the form of which its present proportions are but the expansion and development. Its new departure was marked by controversies and by parties unknown to former generations, and which yet remain in full activity under the Constitution of the United States.

A period of growth requires or facilitates changes to which no former generation would have given its assent. When Market House and Square, Post Office and Custom House, Town records and treasury had drawn the commerce of the port into their neighborhood, an end came at last to the venerable Town street. Its dissolution had, during several years, been foreshadowed. Yet when it finally parted asunder, the neighbours were long in doubt how to dispose of its remains. During a generation its severed fragments bore local names. A part of it lying north of King street or Gaol lane, was popularly called Wil-

liams street, for there had been the founder's homestead.¹ The southern part of the Town street was styled by the same authority—usage—Water street. The tide still flowed to its sidewalk. The inconvenience of separate titles for different parts of one thoroughfare, forbade their continuance. Constitution Hill, which, alone, of all the parts of the Town street, had a well-marked beginning and end, yet retains its popular designation. The name sufficiently indicates the period of its origin. The old hill has suffered less than any of our ancient highways, from the changes of three generations, and still affords a reminiscence of the appearance of the whole Town street, during the middle period of the last century. The long suffering of eighty years ago had its limits. But it may well be regretted that an old name of a century and a half's duration, should have been superseded by those of "North" and "South" "Main" streets—two as tasteless and prosaic titles as municipal perversity could devise. (1805.) After the gale of September, 1815, the ancient docks which yet remained at the South end.

1. See Daniel Anthony's Map, 1803.

were filled,—a new Water street arose, and the primitive "Toune streete" forever ceased to be "the greate streete that lyeth by the waterside."¹

In 1805, the Town Council gave to the ancient names of many principal streets, a legal establishment and perpetuity. The name of "Main street" was unhappily retained. "Hope street" now first received the family name of the Powers, who had been the earliest owners of some of the adjoining estates. "James street" was so called in memory of James Arnold, the late Treasurer. "Planet street" now received a legal title, and "Hopkins street" superseded the former "Bank lane." Alleys and lanes were promoted to the dignity of streets. "Gaol lane" became "Meeting street," "Bowen's alley" was thenceforth "Bowen street," "Stamper's lane," a well worn footpath, in the earliest days of the Town, was changed to "Stamper's street," and

1. During a century and a half most of the highways of the Plantations had borne only popular names. These were given at the pleasure of proprietors or of neighbours, and might have been changed at their will, to the annoyance or injury of future owners. See Ordinances of 14th of October, and 12th November, 1805. The Ordinance of 1806 was only an amendment or revision of that of November, 1805.

such let it ever remain, as a memorial of the privations of the early settlers. It was described in the ordinance of 1805, as lying immediately west of the Montgomery tavern. This was an old Revolutionary rallying point, at which, during many years, youthful patriotism was stimulated by the view of a grim *effigy* of General Montgomery. There are few, if any, now living who can recall either the portrait or the inn. Townsmen of note in their day thought to preserve their names by affixing them to the ways which they had once frequented. "Arnold street" was a memorial of Christopher Arnold; "John street," of John Innes Clarke. "Benevolent street," "George street," and "Howland's alley," now became legal titles. "Williams' street" had been opened by the Thayer family in 1794, and, in default of any other memorial of him, was named by them from their ancestor, the founder. It should not have been left to his own descendants to furnish his memorial. It should have been a grand and central avenue, to be in after days the chief place of concourse and procession, and more worthy of the Town than that

which bears the unmeaning title of Westminster street.

In but few instances were the names newly given in 1805. They were chiefly old popular titles now established by law. However we may censure the bad taste of some of them, we may still be grateful to the town government that it left behind it so much that serves to connect the present with the past. More than in many other cities, old highways and localities in Providence preserve the memory of those who first gained them from the wilderness. The names of the ancient proprietors, contemporaries of Williams and Harris, of Olney, Abbott and Power, who bore the first burdens, and aided the first prosperity of the town, are yet kept alive in the neighbourhood of their ancient homesteads. We may hope that modern fancies will not disturb associations respected by so many generations of their successors.

During these long years of a colony nominally subject to a monarchical regime, we may note, even in these trivial things, how slightly the sentiment had entered into the affairs of common life. In

the earlier years of the house of Brunswick, when the British crown was surrounded by a halo of popularity brighter than ever before or since, no square or highway received the name of English king or statesman. Even rebellious Boston was more historical. There was never in Providence, as in so many American towns, any Chatham street, Crown street, William street, Prince street, or Nassau street. One ancient way divided the popular voice between the rival appellations of "King street" and "Gaol lane." The founders had brought with them—far less than in most of the other colonies—few of the monarchical or even the historical elements of their social or political life. The home government did nothing to strengthen or increase them, and at the first strain upon the ties which bound together the old country and its dependency, they parted without regret, and forever.

From such materials as were attainable, I have in this paper attempted some description of the outward and material growth and aspect of the Plantations in their earlier days. In a reproduction of scenes long since faded away, little aid is afforded by contempo-

aneous letters or descriptions. Our chief resort is to records, which, however dry and fragmentary, are at least authentic, and which exhibit men's thoughts, passions and prejudices, as embodied in their public acts. It will always be a subject of regret that through their poverty or religious scruples, we have no representations of the founders or of their abodes. Much history is preserved in portraiture, and even in the outlines of buildings, however rudely sketched. Without such aid, descriptions of life and manners drawn from legal records lose much of their distinctness and effect. Careful research is recovering illustrations from documents now carefully preserved. But still the founders of Rhode Island will be seen only in outlines shadowy and indistinct. One phase of colonial life in the seventeenth century—one form of the reaction against puritanism, is known chiefly through the representations of its enemies. The disputes and rivalries of the town street and the town mill, the homely jests, quaint criticisms or bitter denunciations by which those earnest if unlettered theologians characterized each others' doctrines or manners, the first attempts at enjoyment after the

existence of the Plantations had become secure,—all these have perished beyond recall. When antiquarian curiosity was at last excited, the materials for a reconstruction of the past were beyond its reach. Volumes of obsolete controversy are but indifferent substitutes for pictures of early colonial life such as are afforded by the journals of Winthrop and Fox.

In this attempt to describe the outward and material aspect of the Plantations, it seemed best to begin with the lines laid down by the chain and compass of the first surveyors, and to follow the primitive highways as they pierced the wilderness. These show with sufficient clearness the first planters' conception of their work, and their hopes of what in time it might become. These show us also, those hopes advancing slowly towards fulfillment, and how they have been changed or disappointed. In some future papers I may say something of the men who once trod these ancient pathways, of the controversies which divided them, and how, in spite of all they could do to the contrary, they at last built up a prosperous colonial town. From the recital of what went on in these old thoroughfares, it will appear

that they were far from being such dull and wearisome places as a view of more modern colonial life might tempt us to believe. The old provinces were planted by men who were not mere imitators or copyists. Their ideas were constructive and sometimes original. They knew that Europe could not be transplanted, but that the social and political institutions of a new country must have the flavour of its own soil.

There was never any want of liveliness in the old "Toune Streete." It was the scene of nearly every thing which happened in the Plantations during an hundred and fifty years. The localities are well known. We can point to the "home-lot" where Williams entertained Miantonomo, and wrote his book against Fox; where, a few steps to the northward, Richard Scott treasured up his wrath until the time came to pour out his vial; where Verin restrained his wife's liberty of conscience; where Chad Brown remonstrated against the outrage upon Gorton and upon the whole colony; where Olney on behalf of the Plantations had his interviews with the Commissioners of Charles II; where, at the

"Great Town's Quarter Day," the freemen gathered under the buttonwood tree to consult, first, for the security of their families, and then for the rebuilding of the town; where were the ancient inns, in which the lawgivers of the colony provoked the censure of the Privy Council, and responded by measures more offensive still; where freemen of another generation planned the destruction of the Gaspee, and set free the navigation of the Bay. Many of us yet remember the old balcony from which two kings of England were proclaimed, and from which also, the Colony proclaimed itself free from their successors, and the spot where, not many years ago, the old pillory and whipping-post taught a reverence for practical morals, such as the devices of modern philanthropists fail to inspire. These, and many like things have made the old street, in some sort, a historical monument. Whatever there was of self-denial or of self-will, of wisdom, or of absurdity, and we shall meet with each in its turn and measure, found utterance in the Town Street, and at the Town Mill.

Some are yet among us who are of the last genera-

tion which saw, while yet unchanged, the scenes which were familiar in colonial days. During two hundred years many of these remained but little altered, and then, the needs of commerce began to efface the most characteristic features of the old Town. Down to the building of the Worcester Railroad, (1845,) one of the most conspicuous of these, the ancient cove, with its salt marshes, beds of oyster shells and scows, retained much of the appearance which it had worn when the Proprietors strove with the freeholders for the possession of its thack-beds. But a few years have gone by since the shores of the Seekonk were little other than what they were in the days of Williams and Harris, and no vigorous effort of imagination was needed to recall its aspect when they guided their canoes across its waters. It may be hoped that the antiquarian zeal of some among us, will reproduce the documents and records of early days, with such aid as the photographer can yet supply. After a few more years of growth and prosperity, this will have become impracticable.

The Town will then have resumed its southward movement, which began at the end of Philip's war.

At this centennial period, we may be permitted to predict the future in the light of the past. Gazing forward across another hundred years, we may catch the distant murmur of the next celebration, thronged by the far greater multitudes of a new city far below the "Great Salt River," and looking out upon the broad waters of the Bay. Its avenues, parks, and piers have superseded the present centres of concourse and exchange, as these succeeded to the "warehouse lots" of former days. The highways which listened to the disputes of Proprietors and freeholders, and of town and country have lapsed into something of their ancient quietude, and "home-lots" have reasserted their ancient rights against present places of trade. We may hear afar off, the music of a centennial procession wending its way through streets to be established by unborn councilmen, amid the sighs of a yet unassessed generation. As in their turn, the partakers in that coming anniversary recount the achievements of their century, they will look back upon the enterprises, hopes and disappointments of the present time, as upon those of "a day of small things." Let us hope that they will

also regard its acrimony and strife with something of the charity with which we remember the controversies of the Town Street and the Town Mill.

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